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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“I DO PITY YOU,” HE SAID, “FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY SOUL; BUT HAVE YOU TOLD ME ALL YOUR STORY?”]

ROSAMOND’S HUSBAND.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

This opportunity Rosamond sought, was not long in coming, and it came unexpectedly, before she had time to frame any set phrases, or to adjust her words.

Returning one afternoon from the village across the fields, accompanied only by “Laddie,” she came suddenly face to face with Lord Kingsford on horseback.

He was riding slowly down a lane, just as she was stepping into it, over a stile. The instant he saw her he drew up and dismounted, saying,—

“Just in time to be too late, to help you over, Miss Dane. That’s a fine dog of yours,” alluding to “Laddie,” who was leaping round the horse.

“Yes, he is very handsome,” she returned; “at least so judges say. I don’t know much about it.”

“Did you get him here?” putting the reins over his arm as he spoke, and walking beside

her—the first time he had ever voluntarily accompanied her since the days of long ago.

“No,” in a rather icy voice. “I’ve had him years.”

Not in the least daunted her companion went on,—

“And where did you get him?”

“He was given to me by a——” then she paused abruptly. She was not going to say friend, lover, or husband; so, after a very remarkable hesitation she brought out the word “man.”

“Gentleman?”

“I—I—I believed so then,” expressively.

“And have had reason to change your mind apparently,” he proceeded, looking down at her: but her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she was walking along at an unusual speed, and her face was pallid, and had a set, relentless expression. Suddenly she raised her eyes, and said,—

“Perhaps you knew him? I feel constrained to ask you, impelled to speak of him, though the thought of him turns my brain to fire. His very name scorches my lips!”

“What was his name?” said Lord Kings-

ford, in a strange voice, bringing his horse to a sudden halt in the shady, high-banked lane, and confronting her with a face as pale as her own.

“I never mention it—never,” she returned, in a tone almost insensible from agitation; “but you are like him, though much older. I saw it at the first glance!” tremulously. “Your name is the same; you may be cousins. I believe his surname was assumed, but he called himself Allan Gordon.”

“Allan Gordon! And what was he to you?” asked Lord Kingsford. “Your lover?”

“Heaven help me!” she returned in an agitated whisper. “He did me the greatest wrong a man can do a woman. He ruined my life, and left me! Yes, I see you start. You well may. I am a whitened sepulchre among—among other girls. I’ve no right to be among them, though mine was not the sin!”

“But he married you!” said the other, sharply.

“Aye, but where? No one knows. Where is my marriage certificate? Where all these five years is he?” she asked, excitedly. “A first I thought, I should have gone mad; bu-

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I've got over all that now!" in a tone of repressed resentment. "And now the only feeling left to me is hate! You think the term too strong, I see; but if you had been used as I was—miserable, ignorant country girl as I was—you would understand. You wonder; yes, that I, Miss Dane, the heiress, with the world at her feet, do not shrink from laying bare my miserable past to you, and you only. Something makes me do it, in spite of myself. Something draws you to me! I—looking him steadily in the face—"can account for both these extraordinary circumstances. You have a vague look of him. Do not think that that is a passport to my good graces," with a curious pale smile; "but I've felt instinctively that you are his kinsman—you are his namesake, and I—I—"stammered—can I call myself wife? No!" drawing out her hands, "I dare not call myself that! They say he had another. I cry aloud to you to avenge me of Allan Gordon! You look as if you thought me crazy, and you do not answer me; but if you knew how he found me, how he stole every thought of my heart, every atom of love I had to give—and it was much—and how he left me," covering her face with her hands, "you would cast him out from your name and name!" she added, in a choked voice.

"Where did he go? Why did he leave you?" said Lord Kingsford, at last, in a strange tone, and speaking with averted eyes.

"Could he have been tired of me so soon—in ten days, you would say? But he did. He left me to sail the Atlantic. He landed there safely, and I have never heard of him since. Oh, if you know how I wept, and wept, and waited and waited, you would pity me!"

"I do pity you," he said, "from the very bottom of my soul; but have you told me all your story?" looking her full in the face with troubled, anxious eyes.

"All? There is no more to be told. Was it not enough?" she demanded, passionately.

"All!" he echoed with visible disappointment. "Nothing more?"

"Nothing more. And now tell me at once—are you his cousin?" eagerly laying her hand on his arm as she spoke.

"No."

"Nor his kinsman?"

"No."

"Oh, then, why have I unbared all my bitter past to you, a stranger!" she exclaimed, frantically. "What wrong has possessed me, to build so much on a look, and on a name; but it will all be sacred with you, I know!" imploringly. "You, and you only, of all our neighbours, have looked into my hateful past!"

"It shall be sacred—most sacred," he said, gravely. "But, once more, were there no extenuating circumstances? Had you no comfort of any kind?" expressively.

"None—none," now weeping. "Would that I had!" her mind going back to the little green grave, whilst his positively reeled, as he thought of the enormity of her falsehood.

"Tell me," he said, after a moment of silence, during which he gently brushed the tears from her eyes, "why you think that I am attracted to you—and you are right, I am."

"Oh, because I have a foolish idea that perhaps I remind you of your wife. I've seen you looking at me, as if you saw a very well-known face before you, and yet a face that made you feel a little sad. Am I right?"

"You are quite right," he retorted, scrutinizing her quite dispassionately. "You are very like her."

"Then, she must have been pretty," said Rosamond, coolly.

"She was very pretty."

"And, of course, quite young?"

"As you say, quite young," he returned, in notably.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Rosamond. "It was hard for her to go and leave you and Tommy. I wish it had been me instead!"

"Oh, come, nonsense! You must not say such things," impatiently. "You have the best part of your life before you yet. These mere ideas are absurd. Life is before you."

"No," resolutely. "That is dead—dead and buried. I know," now in quite a different tone, "that I must seem to have made an awful fool of myself to you this afternoon," she observed, "and to be a kind of insane, hysterical young woman. I'm very, very sorry now I told you, but something I could not resist made me tell you of my past, and ask if you knew him."

"There's no harm done, Miss Dane. Your secret is perfectly safe with me, and I like you better for telling me. Strange as it sounds, I have a better opinion of you than I had before. I should not wonder," speaking very gravely, and with his eyes fixed on her face, "if Allan Gordon were to come back some day. Who are all these people coming down the lane? A picnic," he added in another tone of voice. "Well, then, I won't detain you any longer. Allow me to help you over the stile. Whee, Red King, whee, boy!" to his very impatient steed. "I shall not forget all you have told me to-day," he said, passing her hand with a sudden, significant grasp. "When things come to the worst, they mend," lowering his voice significantly. "Good-bye, Miss Gordon!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Bronze Rosamond could speak, could find breath her or wits, the chestnut horse and his rider were galloping down the lane, and she could make no reply. Mrs. Gordon! How odd it sounded, and it had been her name once, and ought to have been her name ever since. "Mrs. Gordon," she whispered to herself, with rosy cheeks. Yes, her marriage had never been proved; indeed, no strong measures in the way of searching registers had been taken; her certificate was not forthcoming nor her husband! She could not identify or name the church, and that was enough for her friends. Now, all they wanted was the use of her money; and that she would reflect lustre on them by presently making what is called a grand match; but time enough for that.

Sometimes passed and she saw nothing of Lord Kingsford, although he was the theme, the constant theme, of Amy's active tongue. She shrank from meeting him ever since that interview in the lane, when she told herself angrily she had been quite, quite mad (every time she thought of it), and how, under an irresistible impulse, she had laid bare her heart to a stranger, her face burst like a flame. Almost daily she met little Tommy riding his new pony—a tiny Shetland—led by a groom, and though she avoided Tommy's father she did not avoid Tommy, and he and she were excellent friends. It was no uncommon thing for her to walk a mile beside his pony, or to restrain her fiery chestnut mare's rapid, drifting walk to a pace in accordance with the sturdy, little, short legs of the pony. Tommy was very fond of the "pretty lady," and told his father a great deal about her, and how he wished he would have her to live with them; a request which his parent received with the utmost composure, but which nearly caused the death of the stout butler from suppressed convulsions. He and the upper servants had their own ideas about the "pretty Miss Dane" and their master. What was she so bent on riding and walking and making such a fuss about the child for?—the little Honourable. There was such a thing as making love to the baby for her sake of the nurse, and they winked and looked knowing, and grinned and nudged each other violently; and, indeed, it would be as well if he were to marry again, they agreed; the house was lonely-like without a lady. It seemed so odd to see him and the child sitting there at table alone.

Of course, he had dinner parties—grand ones, now and then—for gentlemen; but anyone could see that he was not set on company, and all he cared about was hunting, and

Tommy; and he were rare food of him, they admitted on every occasion. Certainly Tommy was a child of whom any parent might well be proud. Early hardships, frugal fare, and open air had not stunted his growth; on the contrary, he looked nearer six than four his last birthday. Poor boy, no one knew his birthday; and his father, for shame sake, invented a date, which was duly kept. He had a very high-born, aristocratic air, this gutter-child; thin once ragged little Tommy, whose tender little white arms and shoulders had once borne traces of heavy bruises and red weals. Mother Nan, "her mark," and these bruises and weals, which made Allan's heart ache to see, were indirectly the fault of the boy's mother, who had so basely deserted him. For these blows, for these bruisures, he told himself he could never forgive Rosamond—never!

It was strange! Was it instinct? he asked himself, incredulously, or was it human nature, the extraordinary fascination she had for her child, and he for her! He was constantly talking of her, of the ship she gave him, the flowers she picked him, of how she kissed him, the pretty lady; he even went so far as to add her name to his prayers. "Heaven bless father and me, and all our friends, and the pretty baby," and Allan listened in silence. After all, why should he not, when she was his mother, though both she and Tommy were ignorant of the fact? And what a striking pair they made—mother and son—he could not help remarking to himself, as he overtook them one evening not far from the park gates—both riding—she on her haughty chestnut thoroughbred, which she reined in with some trouble—as she stooped down, her perfect figure shown to the best advantage in a dark blue habit, and bent over the child eagerly, as he prattled and looked up to her. He was telling her some story, at which they both laughed. Yes, she laughed too; she, who rarely smiled—quite a merry girlish laugh, worthy the old days of the Rose of Drydd. Allan rode slowly behind them, enjoying the picture for some time, and building rosy fancies of "what might have been," but with a sudden start he remembered the fashionable Miss Dane, the London beauty, the heartless mother, and the wife who had lied to him, no later than the last time he saw her; and he smothered his feelings, and trotting up beside them, as if he had but just come on the scene, lifted his hat, and hoped Miss Dane (with a curious cynical smile) was quite well.

Miss Dane muttered something, became perfectly scarlet, and after a rather stilted, disjointed exchange of platitudes about the beauty of the evening bade Tommy good-bye, bowed very stiffly to Lord Kingsford, and wheeling her fretting foam-flaked horse round, was soon out of sight, leaving, did she but guess it—but how could she? her husband and her son to continue their way alone.

* * * * *

A week later, just as the Braud family were about to go to dinner, and were sitting in the drawing-room awaiting the welcome sound of the gong, a servant entered with a note in his hand, his usual stately and correct deportment rather flattered, and handed themissive to Rosamond, adding rather excitedly, "And the carriage is waiting for you, miss."

"Who on earth can it be from?" ejaculated the young lady, carelessly tearing it open.

"Read it aloud!" cried Amy, eagerly.

And Rosamond read the following in a sharp-pointed, jam-crock sort of hand:

"DEAR MADAM,—

"Master Tom has met with a terrible accident, a runaway carriage went over him and the pony this evening. He keeps asking for you, and Lord Kingsford begs that you will come without delay. We don't think the child will live through the night.—Your obedient servant,

"MISTRESS."

The note dropped out of Rosamond's shaking hands as she read the last sentence.

"How awful!" exclaimed Amy, picking it up. "Poor dear little Tommy, this is from

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the homekeeper. I suppose Lord Kingsford is nearly crazy!"

"Will you really go, Rosamond?" said her mother. "What good can you do? and it will seem so odd."

"I shall certainly go!" she returned, fiercely, "and at once."

"Wait, without your dinner!" cried Colonel Brand, whose dinner was his god.

"Do you think I could eat?" she demanded fiercely. "Amy, bring me a cloak like a good girl!"

"My dear child, you must take Evans," said her mother, "think of what people would say—a bachelor's house, and you a young girl!"

"In the chamber of death there is no such thing as propriety," returned Rosamond, hastily wrapping a soft beribboned over her rich cream-coloured dinner dress. "You need not expect me back before morning. Good-night," she said, as she hurried from the room, ran quickly down the steps, and sprang into the horses little brougham that awaited her. A pair of splendid horses dashed forward as the door was banged, and in another moment she was bowling down the avenue, a liberal ten miles an hour. She looked far more like a girl going to a ball than a mother (though unconscious of the fact) on her way to the death-bed of her only child.

CHAPTER XX.

ROSAMOND drove very rapidly down the avenue, and they seemed to flash almost through the country roads and lanes that intervened between Violet Hill and Armine Court. As they dashed up to the portico Mrs. Trent was already waiting at the foot of the steps to conduct her indoors.

"To have lost no time, I see," she remarked, glancing at Rosamond's evening dress and bare head. "It was very good of you to come, miss. The child's been wearying for you, and my accounts he's going fast," she whispered, as she conducted Rosamond through the sumptuous pillars hall, and up the shallow, winding stone staircase here and there in the background, in passages and corridors. Miss Dane was conscious of groups of servants; of women with aprons to their eyes, of long-faced donkeys, and of a sense of some great trouble hanging over the whole establishment.

"I suppose the doctor is here?" said Rosamond, as they walked down a long carpeted gallery, scarcely speaking above her breath.

"Doctor? To be sure, and one coming from London. Besides, Lord Kingsford would have every doctor in the land here if he had his way. He's nearly out of his mind!" raising her hands as she spoke. "You'll have a bad time with them both, miss. I give you fair warning, but I believe you have a stout heart, as well as a kind one. It's a terrible thing for the poor little fellow to die," weeping as she spoke, "and no lady near him, no one but me or Susan. You must just take the place of her that's dead and gone for one day."

"You mean—you mean," said her companion, hesitating.

"Who should I mean but his mother?"

"And here we are. This is the room," opening as she spoke the door into a large apartment, in which was a dim light, and a little white bed. The bed, of course, contained Tommy, and Tommy's father was standing beside it, when the door admitted this beautiful, graceful apparition in a trailing silk dinner-dress, the child's mother.

A feeble exclamation of joy from Tommy caused him to turn his head and advance to meet her hastily.

"Very kind of you to come" (he did not say Miss Dane); "but I knew you would. Tommy," and his voice shook a little, "has been created asking for you since sunset," and with a great effort, and in a very low voice, "I'm afraid he'll never see another."

"You must not say that," she returned in a quick whisper. "You must not give him up

yet. Remember, Lord Kingsford, that whilst there's life there's hope."

"Not much here, I'm afraid," he replied, with an eloquent shake of his head, turning once more towards the patient. The doctor and Susan, the nursemaid, stared to see Miss Dane actually arriving on the scene.

"What brought her here? It was most extraordinary," and they both looked their amazement, Susan point-blank, and the doctor through his spectacles. Their presence was quite indifferent to her. She went over, knelt down by Tommy's bed, and taking one of his little hot hands in hers kissed it softly, and whispered. "My poor Tommy, what has happened to you?"

"It was the carriage," he answered, faintly, fixing as she spoke his bright eyes on her face. "It came so fast, and knocked down Topsy and me."

"That will do, Tommy; you must not talk," said his father, anxiously. "I'll tell her all about it for you," in answer to the child's appealing look. "You must know," addressing himself to Rosamond, who was still kneeling by the bed, "that Tommy and Jones went out for their usual ride, and were coming home about five o'clock, when, at Clifton Cross, Tommy says he heard a great noise and galloping and shouting, and a carriage and pair dashed round the corner before he could get out of the way. He remembers no more. Jones picked him up, and carried him home in his arms, and here he is. Is not that it, Tommy?"

Tommy nodded acquiescently, and then whispered eagerly, "Tell about my arm," the other arm, which lay outside the counterpane in splints. "It is broken, and I am sure Miss Dane will be pleased to hear what a brave little boy you were when it was set—how you never said one word all the time!"

"And are there any other injuries?" questioned Rosamond, anxiously.

"Yes," with a painful expression, "his ribs—internal. Dr. Crossbones does not quite know the extent; he is waiting till the London doctor comes to make an examination."

"And when will he be here?"

"Not for two hours." Rosamond glanced at the clock. It was now half-past eight, and at this moment the local doctor came over and said, authoritatively,—

"This talking won't do. Lord Kingsford, the child is in high fever, his pulse past counting. Does Miss Dane know what a serious case it is? I, of course, have no right to speak, but I question very much if she is not doing more harm than good. She would really be better away. She would, indeed."

"Miss Dane will stay as long as I stay," returned Lord Kingsford, decisively. "I'll be surety that she does more good than harm."

If, as he said to himself, Tommy was going to die, who had a better right to be present than his mother? But was she to know? How was she to be told? Or should she be told at all? This was a question he had been eagerly debating within himself all the evening, and had come to no settled conclusion.

The doctor walked huffily away, and stood beside the fire now, watch in hand, having made his protest and done his duty, and wearing an expression, as he glared over at the young people, that said: "Kill him now, as soon as you please! I wash my hands of it! In fact, I'd rather you killed him than not!"

A low voice next broke the silence. Turning his head towards his father, and fixing his eyes on him earnestly, he said,—

"The doctor is cross. He thinks I'm going to die, doesn't he? Am I, father?"

"Would you be afraid to die, Tommy?" leaning over him. "If you were—I don't say you are, you know," in a husky voice.

"I don't want to go away and leave you and Topsy, and you," looking at Rosamond. "I'd rather stay. But—but if the doctor sends me—catching his breath—" "I'll see my mother, won't I, father? How shall I know her—or will she know me?"

To this appeal Lord Kingsford turned a deaf

ear, and getting up, with visible agitation, went over and pushed back the curtains, and stood looking out on the moon-flooded Park for a considerable time in silence. Then he joined the doctor by the fire, and held a long, whispered conversation with him—a conversation which evidently did not tend to raise his hopes; for when he rejoined Rosamond his face was ghastly pale, and beads of perspiration stood upon his brow. He was going to tell her.

But, stay, what was this? Was the child already dead, or was he asleep? Oh! blessed relief from that second of agony—he was fast asleep, with his hand in his mother's.

"Hush!" she said, putting up a warning finger, and speaking in the lowest whisper. "He has just gone off. He will do yet, looking with a glace of kindly encouragement. "I don't think he is quite so hot as he was, and I don't think he is as much injured as he, nodding at the doctor, "imagines."

"Oh! if I could only share your hopes!" said the other, taking a low chair beside her. "If I only could; but I'm afraid, from what he says, and from the shock, that it is a very bad case indeed. If you had seen him when Jones brought him in, covered with dust and blood, and quite insensible, you would wonder he was alive; but I'm glad you did not see it. I never shall forget it!"

"Poor, poor, little Tommy! How dreadful it sounds—a runaway going over him. But his little bones are more easily knit than ours, and he always seemed such a strong and healthy child."

"So he was. He never had an ailment in his life. Oh!" burying his face in his hands, "if he is taken from me I think I shall go mad, for he is all I have in the world!"

"He won't be taken from you," said Rosamond, gently, touched by his profound grief. "Heaven is good; I believe he will be spared to you. Do not despair," laying her hand on his coat sleeve gently. "Look at me, think how much better off you are than I am. You have him—I have no one."

"It is your own fault that you have not!" he returned, with sudden impetuosity, raising his head from between his hands and surveying her curiously.

"No, you are wrong," she returned, in a sad, hopeless accent. "It was fate that was too hard for me—fate deprived me of everything at one blow. I staked my all on one man—the one I told you of," she whispered, in an agitated voice, "and lost; and, as far as happiness goes, I am bankrupt. See how different you are," consolingly; "you have this dear little boy. Heaven bless him and preserve him to you for many years; and, if—if your wife was taken, you are not like me. You, I'm sure, have nothing but happy memories of her, poor girl. She was fortunate to die young, beloved, and deeply regretted. Who knows but she may be here beside you to-night?"

"Shall I tell you who she was," said Lord Kingsford, in a hoarse whisper, bending closer to her as she spoke, and looking at her with an indescribable expression—an expression of intense concentrated bitterness, and something else, and struggling evidently with some powerful though hidden emotion.

Rosamond gazed at him, in amazement, his eyes held hers fast. She felt compelled to meet them, and their stern, insistent look.

"Yes," she faltered, a little frightened in spite of herself. "Yes, tell me who she was. I should like to know."

"Sir George Fox, please," interrupted a voice behind them, and there at the bedside stood Mrs. Trent, and in the doorway, a cheerful dapper, middle-aged, sharp-looking little gentleman, who, as Lord Kingsford rose, advanced briskly into the room, saying,—

"And this is our little patient. And Lord Kingsford, I presume?"

"Yes," he returned, "I'm glad, very glad to see you. You have managed to come by a special, after all."

"Yes, yes, no time in getting down. Urgent case; child seems asleep. Ah!" looking at the

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other medical man, "should like a few words with you directly;" and bowing to the young lady kneeling by the bed, with the child's hand fast in hers, "Lady Kingsford, I presume?"

CHAPTER XXI.

To this point-blank question, Lord Kingsford made no reply for quite two minutes, and the Doctor seemingly had taken silence for consent, or forgotten the matter; being busily engaged in feeling the pulse of the patient, who lay beneath his searching eyes, flushed, and breathing heavily, but still in a profound sleep. At last he said,—

"This young lady is a friend of my little boy's, who has been kind enough to come to him in answer to his urgent request."

"Oh!" was all the other answered, giving Rosamond one keen, exhaustive look. "Just lift him up, as quietly as you can," he said, nodding over to her; "don't wake him, but I want to take his temperature, and put this tube under his arm."

This lifting up without awaking him was easier said than done, for though Rosamond raised him in the very, very gentlest manner, he moaned, started, opened his eyes, and exclaimed,—

"Oh! my arm, my arm!" in a voice of anguish.

"Your arm will be all right, my fine fellow," said the London doctor, reassuringly; "it will be well before you are twice married."

"Are you the doctor?" asked the child, with wide open, anxious eyes.

"I am. I've come to try and make you well. Don't talk now, there's a good boy," authoritatively.

"You won't kill me then? I don't want to die," his under lip quivering, "and be put in the ground like the coachman's little girl."

"No, no, no," impatiently. "Miss—or Mrs.—I beg your pardon, turning quickly to Rosamond; "I did not catch your name."

"My name is Dane, Miss Dane," she rejoined, composedly.

"Well, Miss Dane," in a hurried whisper, "for goodness sake keep him quiet, don't let him talk and excite himself in this way; use your influence, for goodness sake," and in a still lower tone, "I suppose he has no mother?"

"No," responded Rosamond, shaking her head mournfully. "Poor little boy, he has never known one."

"Well, you must do your best to keep him still whilst I examine his head, and see if he has any internal injuries, any bones or ribs broken."

Bekoning his brother professional to his side, they had another muttered consultation, and Rosamond said, in a soft, coaxing, but very firm, tone,—

"Now, Tommy, you are going to show the doctor and your father what a fine, brave boy you can be. He is going to see if you have hurt yourself, and how soon he can cure you. He won't give you any more pain, darling, than he can help," stooping over and kissing the little flushed face, with wet eyes. "You'll be a good, brave Tommy, won't you?"

"Yes, if I may hold your hand," he returned, with rather a tremulous voice, gazing at her appealingly.

"We are going to make an examination, now," said Sir George to Lord Kingsford. "The young lady seems to have plenty of nerve, she will be better than you. You see, I think you should know that everything depends on this; we shall be able to know one thing or the other."

"You mean life or death!" returned Lord Kingsford, in a strange voice.

A nod was all the doctor vouchsafed as a reply. If it had been a woman he had to deal with, he would have softened the announcement, but to another man what did it matter?

Lord Kingsford went over and stood at the window, whilst this vital question was being probed. No, he had not the courage to stand beside the doctor during this awful ordeal, this

moment of throbbing, agonising suspense. Strong man as he was, he trembled in every limb, and beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead as he leant his elbows on the window sash to steady himself, and gazed out blindly, as one dazed, on the beautiful summer night.

"How dare the whole world look so calm and peaceful?" he asked himself, fiercely, when Tommy was dying!

He knew he was going to die; he was sure of it! It was a judgment on him for being so entirely wrapped up in, and absorbed in the child. How long he had been standing there he knew not. Five minutes; ten; an hour. It really was less than ten minutes, when he was brought back to reality by the touch of a hand on his arm. It was Rosamond. She looked very pale. Nay, she was crying! Two or three large tears trickled unmoleded down her cheeks. Her face was unusually agitated.

"I see, I know!" he exclaimed, turning to her sharply, and speaking in a broken voice, "I understand; you come to tell me the worst."

"I do not!" she replied, in hasty accents. "I come to tell you the best," placing her hand firmly on his arm. "He will be spared to you, please Heaven. He will live!"

Her words were that instant corroborated by the London doctor, who now joined them.

"I'm glad to say it's not serious as we thought; bruises, a broken arm, severe concussion, and cuts on the head, that's all, a predisposition to fever; but if kept cool and quiet will be all right. We've just given him an opiate now, and Miss Dane has promised to sit up with him! Don't go near him!" putting forth a detaining hand. "The fewer people about the better. I think you and I, and our friend," nodding at the other practitioner, who seemed rather disappointed that the case was not so critical, as he had urgently declared, "are best out of the room. Perfect quiet, perfect quiet, you know; and leave him to the woman. I suppose," he said, as he followed his host into a large library, and cast himself into an arm-chair, and joined the tips of his fingers; "that the boy above stairs, is your only child?"

"Yes," returned Lord Kingsford, turning from giving some hasty directions to a footman, a servant supper and bed for the great medicine man.

"And being the heir of course, it's a serious thing," said Sir George, in the most matter-of-fact voice.

Apart from his professional capabilities (which were splendid) Sir George was a character. He loved a good gossip, and he had plenty of opportunities for picking up many bits of unknown and uncommon family history, in his immense practice, and many peregrinations. Here was a new field for him! He would like to know a little more about this handsome young widower, with one child—a child attended with the utmost devotion, by a strange and very beautiful girl, unmarried.

It was strange. He certainly was anxious to learn something more about the present owner of "Armine Court;" and over a very recherche supper, served in a small, round room, with every adjunct of taste, luxury, and the best of wines, he managed to put his wish into words.

His host was silent and abstracted—seemed to be far away in his thoughts—and yet, doing his best to play the part of entertainer to the two doctors.

"You came in quite expectedly for this title and property; did you not?" demanded Sir George, abruptly, laying down a glass of famous sparkling Burgundy, with a compression of the lips that bespoke the connoisseur.

"Yes; quite unexpectedly," rather formally.

"You were a sailor, or something of that sort, were you not?" went on the other, perfectly unabashed.

"Why should you think so?" with a slight smile.

"Because you have a sunburnt, tanned-look of a man who has been a great deal exposed to all weathers, and the open-air, and a prema-

tured aged look, like most sailors. I'm sure you look older than you really are!"

"I believe I do."

"And you were not a sailor?" interrogatively.

"No, the sea never had any charms for me," evasively.

"I suppose you've been a good deal abroad?"

"Yes, a good deal."

"Married out there?" refilling his glass. "No, I married at home," very stiffly. "What"—using bad words mentally—"was it to this prying old fox where or when he married, or who he had been?" and perhaps something of this was written in his face. So Sir George prudently tried another tack, as he said to himself,—

"Very good thing for you. You have a lady friend, like the one upstairs—a real good Samaritan. You must try and get her to stay. I don't suppose she is one of those girls who go on with a lot of humbug about conventionalities and Mrs. Grundy? She has fine nerve, and a capital way with the child. I am sure she could not have been more tender and gentle with him if she had been his own mother."

At this remark a sudden wave of colour crept over Lord Kingsford's dark face, and he was about to speak when Sir George went on,—

"Yes, yes, we must keep her at all hazards for a few days. We must get her to stay. Talk of an angel—Here she is."

And as he spoke the door of the room opened, and Rosamond stood on the threshold wrapped in a crimson plush opera cloak thrown over her evening dress.

"I've just come to say good-bye, Lord Kingsford. I cannot stay. The carriage has been sent for me with a note from my mother, and I must go."

"Must go!" echoed Lord Kingsford, leaving his two guests, and accompanying her into an ante-room. "I'm very sorry to hear it, but of course I know that I must not impose on your great kindness."

"I would stay if I could, you may be sure of that," she said, energetically; "but, at any rate, he has turned the corner, the worst is over. He is asleep," she continued, reassuringly. "You need not be alarmed about him now."

"I shall never forget your kindness this night," he returned, in a low voice. Never, never in his life had he felt so near forgiving her as then—when they stood alone in the dimly-lighted ante-room looking into each other's eyes; she with warm, sympathetic reassurance—he with what?—an expression she could not understand in his eyes, to her, rather stern and set countenance. She did not know, as he did, that they were a father and mother from whom the shadow of a heavy trouble had just been lifted, that the angel of death had passed over and spared them both—not merely him, but her—the keenest of earthly sorrows—the loss of an only child.

* * * * *

He felt somehow that he could not trust himself to speak, that his voice would betray him, so he merely offered her his arm in silence, and conducted her downstairs and through the hall, and placed her in her waiting brougham, standing on the steps bareheaded whilst it rolled away rapidly, and was soon round a bend in the avenue and lost to sight.

(To be continued.)

In attempting to assist the reader to realize the magnitude of India, the *Spectator* says that it contains some fifty million more people than the whole of Europe. India has sixty-two cities of more than fifty thousand people, twenty-two with more than a hundred thousand while Calcutta contains about eight hundred and sixty-six thousand souls. There are hundreds of cities of twenty thousand, even the names of which are generally unknown to all Europeans.

SIR RUPERT'S WILL.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

SIR RUPERT INGRAM CHASE is in W-shire, a fine old red brick mansion, with stone dressings to door and windows, and an air of antiquity about it much greater than the comparatively recent date of its erection would seem to warrant, for it was built in the reign of Charles the Second; and it was to some caprice on the part of the "merry monarch" that the honour of a baronetcy came to be conferred on one Stephen Ingram—less, it is supposed, for any particular merit of his own than that he chanced to be the father of an extremely pretty daughter, who was maid of honour to Katherine of Braganza, and whose bright eyes rendered her a special favourite of the kings.

The family was, and had been for centuries, a very rich one; the lands of Ingram Chase, broad and fertile, sloped down to the beautiful Severn, whose silver tide rolled through their midst. The park was extensive and well-timbered, and boasted an avenue of gigantic elms that were said to be the finest trees for miles round, and in all W-shire there was not a man more highly esteemed, more deeply respected, than he who now lay on a bed of sickness from which it was feared he would never rise—Sir Rupert Ingram.

Outside the warmth and glory of the sunset fell over the pleasant landscape, touching the tops of the chestnuts, whose spiral columns of blossom were in all the perfection of their pink and white beauty, and making the distant Severn look like molten gold as it flowed along between its green banks: the lilacs were flowering in the shrubberies; laburnums were drooping their yellow tresses, that swayed with graceful languor at each touch of the soft west wind; tulips and hyacinths, narcissi and pansies made patches of colour and sweetness in the prim old Dutch garden, with its stiff box borders, and dense yew hedge cut into arches. All was peaceful and beautiful, full of the promise of the springtime, and breathing faint whispers prophetic of the gracious approach of the dawning summer.

Within it was very different. Doors were closed, windows shrouded; the servants stole about on tiptoe, casting anxious glances at the room where their master lay, and speaking to each other in subdued undertones, and with mysterious shakings of the head that might either be taken to signify sorrow, or a melancholy pleasure in a state of affairs in which all domestic arrangements were turned upside down, and household duties might be safely neglected in favour of gossip.

The baronet's room was large and lofty, and furnished with antique furniture, strictly in accordance with the fashion of the house itself; the windows were hung with dark velvet curtains, as was also the bed, but the drapery of the latter had been looped back, in order that its occupant might the better see the girl seated in a big arm-chair, close by his side—an arm-chair large enough to hold two such slender forms as hers.

There had been silence for some time—a silence broken only by the sick man's irregular breathing, and the faint cadences of a blackbird's song that came in through the open window from the shrubbery below. Presently the baronet opened his eyes.

"Mildred!" he said, and the girl turned round instantly, and bent her head towards him. "What time is Dr. Cartwright coming?"

"He said he should be here at eight, and it is half-past seven now. Do you feel worse—would you like me to send for him?"

The baronet shook his head in a faint negative.

"No, I feel rather better and stronger—the last flicker of the taper before it expires," he answered, raising himself on his pillows, and tightening his clasp of her fingers, while he let his eyes rest on her face—the fair, delicate face of a girl in her earliest youth, for

she was not yet twenty. "I am quite aware that neither Cartwright or any other doctor can do me good now—the sands of life have ebbed too low—but though my body may be weak my brain is still as clear as ever, and lying here I have been thinking of many things—chiefly of you."

She pressed her fresh young lips to his withered hand as it rested on the counterpane.

"You have thought of me always—ever since I knew you," she murmured, in a low tone. "My great regret is that I have never been able to repay your kindness as it deserved."

A shadow flitted over the sick man's wasted, but still fine and patrician features, and he sighed.

"My dear, I am afraid I have not been kind to you, and it is that fear which comes upon me with the greatest bitterness now. I acted, as I thought, for the best; but, after all, I question whether it did not savour of cruelty to bind your fair young life to my old and faded one, instead of leaving you free to accept and stow that love which is youth's peculiar heritage. In making you my wife before you knew your own heart I did you a wrong, whose magnitude I never suspected, but my death will atone—surely it will atone!"

He sank back on his pillow half-exhausted by the vehemence with which he had spoken, and she poured out a little brandy, and after diluting it, gave it him in a spoon.

"If," she said, very earnestly; "if this idea has given you, or still gives you, any pain, I beseech you to put it away, for believe me, you are wrong! You have been, as you are now, my best friend, to whom I owe all I have in the world, and however hard I might strive, I should never be able to tell you my appreciation of your goodness, much less repay it as it deserves. What should I have done ten years ago, when I was left an orphan, if you had not sent me to school, and treated me in every way as if I had been your daughter?"

"My daughter!" he repeated. "Yes, that is just the point. If you had continued in that relationship towards me all would have been well, but last year I was so afraid you would marry that Captain Liston—a mercenary cold-hearted roué, who was counting on the fortune I might leave you—and so, to save you from him—and maybe from a selfish wish to keep you near me—I persuaded you to become my wife."

"You need have had no fear," she said, a faint flush colouring her cheeks. "Captain Liston was never more to me than the veriest stranger."

He looked at her curiously.

"Then you have not been what the world calls 'in love'?"

"No," she answered, with a perfect frankness that was sufficient guarantee of her good faith; "the only person I have ever cared for, except my father, is yourself."

There was silence again. The ticking of the baronet's chronometer and the trill of the blackbird's song were the only sounds audible until Sir Rupert spoke once more.

"You will be a young widow, Mildred—barely nineteen; and you will have no lack of suitors, for you will be the richest woman in the county. I have made a will, leaving nearly all I possess to you."

She started violently, and clasped her hands tightly together in her eagerness that was purely involuntary.

"That is a point on which I wish to speak to you," she said, steady her voice by an effort. "Hitherto I have not dared to mention your cousin's name, but it seems to me the time has now come when it would be cowardice on my part to keep silence. I want you to think of him kindly—to remember he is your nearest relative—and to forget that quarrel which took place between you so many years ago."

Sir Rupert's brow darkened, but he checked the angry retort trembling on his lips as he saw her imploring face.

"When we quarelled, Roland, not I, was in

fault; and you will recollect he has never made any overtures towards reconciliation since."

"I recollect nothing but that he is your next-of-kin and rightful heir," she said, steadily. "And if you were to leave me the money that, to all intents and purposes, should be his, you would make me something more than miser-able."

He looked at her with piercing intentness.

"Do you mean this? Is it really your wish I should constitute Roland my heir?"

"It is my greatest wish—my most fervent desire!" she answered, truthfully. "You have often told me to ask you to do something for me, and hitherto I have not complied, because your generosity left me nothing to wish for; but now I want to take you at your word, and ask a favour. It is that you leave me only just enough to keep me from poverty, and give the rest of your money to Captain Ingram."

He waited some time before answering. His eyes closed, and his brows knit together, as if in meditation. Then he said,—

"Very well, it shall be as you desire. Send a servant for Selwin, and tell him to come at once, and then he shall draw up a fresh will without delay."

Lady Ingram only waited to give him another teaspoonful of the brandy before gliding from the room and despatching a groom with a dog-cart to fetch the lawyer from the village, which was about a mile distant. Then she returned to her post by her husband's bedside, where she sat holding his hand while the sun sank lower and lower till his rim touched the horizon, and the lovely western colours melted into the soft grey shadows of evening.

Not a word was spoken by either. The baronet seemed sunk in a deep reverie, while his young wife's thoughts took a retrospective sweep over the past years.

She was recalling how she and her artist father had wandered about from one continental city to another, leading a careless, varied, Bohemian sort of existence that was alternately luxurious and sordid, according to the sale of her father's pictures, and the consequent state of his finances.

As a rule these were not flourishing, and it was at a very early stage in her career that poor Mildred had to face that most difficult of social and arithmetical problems—how to make both ends meet!

On some of those scenes she could look back with pleasure—the loiterings in quaint old Flemish cities, under the shadow of grand cathedral arches, the gay boulevards of Paris, the green beauties of the lovely Rhine river—all these were pleasant reminiscences; but there was a dark side to the picture, and from that she turned with horror, for upon the artist had fallen the terrible vice of drink, and its hateful influence had sapped his strength, taken the light from his eye, the cunning from his fingers, and finally reduced him to a lamentable state of poverty from which Death came to release him.

In the last stage of his illness the thought of his daughter, alone and unprovided for in a world whose heartlessness he himself knew but too well, was a source of constant anxiety to him; and at last he wrote to one of his old college friends, Sir Rupert Ingram, and asked his help on her behalf.

His appeal met with a ready and generous response. The baronet happened to be in Paris, and hastened to his former companion's bedside, where he arrived just before the artist drew his last breath; and then he took upon himself all arrangements for the funeral, and subsequently sent little Mildred to one of the best schools in Bruxelles, where he defrayed the expenses of her education until she was seventeen, and then had her brought to Ingram Chase, where she had remained ever since.

His kindness towards her had been unvaried, his solicitude that of a father; and when he had besought her to become his wife she had said "yes" as she would have said it if he had asked her to go to the other end of the world, for the one great object of her life was to repay,

as well as she could, the debt she felt she owed him, as at the altar she made the promise to "love, honour, and obey," she registered a mental vow equally solemn and binding to the effect that no effort should be spared on her own part in fulfilling the duties of a most loving wife, and that resolve she had honestly kept.

She had been happy enough at the Chase as its fair young mistress, idolized by every one with whom she came in contact, and reigning like a queen by right divine of her youth and beauty, and only one cloud darkened her horizon.

Sir Rupert's sole remaining relative was a cousin, almost thirty years younger than himself, who was now on his way back from India, where he had been stationed with his regiment. He had not kept up a correspondence with his uncle, for they had quarrelled through some fault of his early manhood, and no reconciliation had taken place between them, so he was not yet aware of the baronet's marriage, and the consequent chances of his own disinheritance.

Mildred, morbidly conscious of the difficulties of her position, had imbibed a certain dread of this cousin, and looked forward to his arrival in England with feelings the very reverse of pleasurable.

Just in all her instincts, she recoiled from the idea of Sir Rupert's wealth descending to her, while he whom she regarded as its rightful inheritor was passed over in silence; but up to the present time she had been withheld from mentioning the subject by a very natural delicacy that only yielded to the pressure of the baronet's own words.

"Thank Heaven, he sees the matter in its true light at last!" she murmured, as she sat watching him, and thinking to herself how much better he looked than he had done a few hours ago; and yet even as the thought came, Longfellow's words involuntarily flashed across her memory:

"Tis but the rest of the fire, from which the air has been taken;
Tis but the rest of the sand when the hour glass is not shaken.
Tis but the rest of the wind between the flaws that blow,
Tis but the rest of the tide between the ebb and the flow!"

By-and-by there was a knock at the door, and a minute later it was opened to admit two gentlemen—Dr. Cartwright and Mr. Selwin, the lawyer, who had driven over post haste in answer to Mildred's urgent message.

"You have arrived at an opportune moment," said the Baronet, languidly, to Dr. Cartwright. "I am about giving instructions to Selwin to make my will, and you may as well remain here the while, and witness it when it is finished. Mildred, will you leave us for half-an-hour?"

She rose, and then hesitated a moment.

"You are sure you are strong enough to bear the fatigue?" she said, doubtfully.

"Quite, and if it is to be done the sooner the better; so go and get a little rest."

She made no further demur, but left the room, the door of which was held open for her by Mr. Selwin, a short, droll man, with wavy hair, and keen, grey eyes which looked at her rather distrustfully as she went out. Mr. Selwin, besides being a friend of Rowland Ingram's, was a cynical disbeliever in womanhood generally, but he looked with especial disfavour on this particular member of the sex, who had contrived to fascinate the baronet by her arts and beauty, and who, he had small doubt, had no other than mercenary motives for her marriage.

Outside, on the landing, Mildred found herself face to face with a woman of about twenty-eight, dressed in a black gown, and wearing a white muslin cap and apron—both rather soquetish in their affectation of simplicity. It was the lady nurse Dr. Cartwright had insisted on having to aid Lady Ingram in tending her husband, and sharing her night vigils. The young wife had objected at first, and even now she was hardly

reconciled to the intrusion; for, strange to say, she had taken a curious dislike to this Miss Pedley, which all her efforts were powerless to overcome.

And yet, looking at the nurse as she stood there, a slim, slight figure with drooping grey eyes, and hair of that nondescript shade that her friends would have called golden, her enemies sandy, there seemed nothing in her appearance calculated to provoke unkindness. Indeed, when those pale grey eyes lighted up, when that white skin was flushed with the bright scarlet that emotion sometimes brought there, Louisa Pedley might have been called pretty—certainly attractive.

"You need not go into my husband just yet," said Mildred. "He is engaged in some business transactions with his lawyers."

"When shall I return to my post then?" asked Miss Pedley, flashing a rapid glance at her from under her gold-fringed lids.

"Not until I call you."

The nurse bowed, and turned away, while Lady Ingram passed into her own room, which was opposite the sick chamber. It was a luxuriant apartment, furnished with pale green chintz, over which moss rosebuds climbed in a pattern as pretty as it was bewildering. The walls were hung with the same; and the toilet-table was a perfect marvel of dainty appointments, laden with crystal vases, and essence boxes, and cut-glass scented bottles.

As a matter-of-fact Mildred was very tired—nay, almost worn out with the fatigue of watching which had kept her without sleep for the last forty-eight hours; nevertheless, fearful lest her husband might require her presence, she determined not to lie down, but drew an easy chair close up to the window, and leaned back in it while the soft, west wind, perfume laden, swept across her face, stirring the light rings of hair above her temples, and bringing with it a certain sense of soothing calm. But nature was too strong for her, and before she had been there very long her eyelids closed, and she sank into the deep slumber of exhausted youth.

She awoke suddenly, and with a start, to find Miss Pedley bending over her.

"Lady Ingram, wake up!" exclaimed the nurse, shaking her arm. "Come to your husband now—at once."

Mildred needed no second bidding, and in another moment was bending over the pillows whereon rested a calm, still face, whose rigid pallor struck her with awe.

"Sir Rupert!" she said, in a low, hushed tone, touching his cold hand with her warm, young fingers. "My dear husband—"

He did not answer. The kind voice had spoken its last sentence, the kind eyes beamed their last glance; and without a murmur of pain or regret, in the solemn silence of the May night, Sir Rupert Ingram had yielded up his soul to his Maker's keeping.

CHAPTER II.

And as the baronet's body was laid to rest in a grim old family vault in the village church, while the sunlight fell in gorgeous patches of brightness through the stained-glass windows, and nature revolved in the beauty of a lovely spring day. Afterwards, those who had assisted at the funeral—mostly neighbours and friends of the deceased baronet—assembled in the library of the Chase to hear the will read; and at Mr. Selwin's especial request, Mildred herself was there, looking very pale and fragile in her sweeping, black robes as she sat near the window, with Miss Pedley on a low chair at her side.

Mr. Selwin, attired in a decorous suit of mourning, and having before him a whole array of letters and papers, stood up with a document in his hand, and cleared his throat preparatory to speaking.

"I have here a deed which I am forced to regard as the last will and testament of my lamented client," he said, in tones of slow

deliberation that nevertheless expressed considerate anxiety; "but, before reading it, I think I shall be only doing my duty in making a slight statement. Last Monday evening I was sent for to draw up another will, whose tenor was very different to this one, and after I had written down Sir Rupert's instructions as briefly and succinctly as I could, he affixed his signature, which was witnessed by Dr. Cartwright, and Stone, the butler. I then requested my client to let me take possession of the will so as to secure its safety; but he declined, and put it under his pillow, saying he wished to think over it. Afterwards Dr. Cartwright and I left the sick room, in accordance with the express desire of Sir Rupert, who declared he felt much better, and desired to be alone, and it was then about eleven o'clock. Shortly before twelve, Dr. Cartwright—who had been having supper with me in the dining-room—went upstairs to see how his patient was, and then he found him, as he first of all imagined, asleep; but on examination discovered that he was dead, and Miss Pedley thereupon called Lady Ingram, who had been in her room during all this time. As it happened, I was the next person to enter the baronet's apartment after Dr. Cartwright, and my first action was to deck for the will; but though I searched thoroughly, though I left no hole or corner unexamined, all my efforts were futile, for the document had disappeared as completely as if it had never existed!"

He paused a moment and looked round. All the company regarded him with keenest attention, and it was evident, followed his narrative genuinely interested.

"Such a thing as a will could not go without hands to take it," he continued; "and as my client had not the strength to leave his bed, and there were no scraps of torn paper about, it seemed clear some one must have stolen it. I therefore made inquiries as to who had entered the room between the hours of eleven and twelve; but their result only plunged the matter in deeper mystery, for the butler says that, after witnessing his master's signature, he went into the front hall, and, instead of going to bed, sat in an arm-chair so as to be in readiness if he should be required. Now in order to get to that wing of the house where Sir Rupert's room is situated, one would have to pass through the hall, and Stone declares most positively that no one did so. Dr. Cartwright and I were together all the time, and Lady Ingram, it seems, was in her room, which is exactly opposite her late husband's."

The inference to be drawn from the lawyer's last sentence was palpable enough, and a deep blush rose to Mildred's cheek as she felt all eyes turned upon her.

"I am not in a position to say more than that I have never seen the will," she observed, with a certain dignity in her voice.

"I suppose you have not a draft of the missing document, Mr. Selwin?" asked Mr. March, one of the guests.

The lawyer shook his head.

"No; but I have a perfect recollection of the terms in which it was couched, and it seems to me I cannot do better than repeat them, if only in justice to the memory of my late client. He left a thousand a-year to his wife, several small legacies to different servants, and the rest of his property, real and personal, to his cousin, Captain Rowland Ingram."

There was a dead silence, and the visitors exchanged significant glances. They were for the most part men past middle age, landowners, country squires given to look upon the breeding of prize oxen and fat pigs as the highest object of life, and with very little sympathy to spare for romance. When their old friend, Sir Rupert, had married his protégé, they shook their heads sagely, quoted one or two proverbs, and confided to each other the melancholy fact that the baronet had made a fool of himself. Naturally they were not inclined to regard the girl who had bewitched

him with any particular degree of favour, and it seemed clear enough to all that there could be no moral doubt as to her connection with the disappearance of the will.

Mildred, young as she was, was yet observant enough to know in what direction their suspicions were tending, and to see as well how terribly circumstances were against her. She grew whiter and whiter, and Mr. March, who was, after all, a kind-hearted man, felt his heart relenting at the sight of her loneliness and youth.

"Perhaps," he said, hastily to the lawyer, "Sir Rupert altered his mind about the will, and destroyed it himself. Dying men are subject to strange caprices sometimes."

"That is the hypothesis on which I am acting; although, candidly, I must confess I think it a very improbable one," answered Mr. Selwin. "True, there was a lamp burning on the table at the bedside, but there were no traces of burnt paper about, and such negative evidence seems to me strongly against the supposition. However, as we cannot find the last will, we are forced to fall back upon the former one, executed immediately after Sir Rupert's marriage, and that I will at once read."

It was short and to the point, and the relative positions of Mildred and Roland Ingram were exactly reversed from what they would have been had the later documents been forthcoming. He was left a thousand a year, and the residue of the property came to her.

As the lawyer ceased reading, Mildred rose, leaning her one hand on the table as if to support herself while she spoke; but what she intended saying was not destined to be heard, for the strain on her nerves, combined with previous fatigue and want of sleep, proved too much, and without a word she swayed to one side, and then fell on the ground in a dead faint.

When she recovered she was in her own room, Miss Pedley and her maid bending over her, armed with smelling-salts, aromatic vinegar, burnt feathers, and the customary paraphernalia of restoratives, all of which she put aside.

"I am quite well now," she said, "I need not trouble you to stay any longer."

The fact was she wanted to be alone, in order that she might think over her position, and decide on her future plan of action.

That she was most awkwardly situated she did not attempt to disguise from herself, for she had been tacitly accused of a crime which she had no means of disproving, and which would cast a shadow over the whole of her future life unless she could establish her innocence.

The evening was very hot, and here in her boudoir, the atmosphere seemed close and stifling. Mildred's longing to get out into the fresh air grew too strong to be resisted; and so, putting on a hat, she slipped quietly down-stairs and into the grounds, unseen by any of the servants, who were having a gossip on the other side of the house.

Not far from the Chase was a wood, through which a narrow path led, and here she betook herself, feeling pretty sure of being free from intrusion, for the public were not admitted within the enclosure. It was rather an unconventional thing for her to be wandering about alone on the evening of her husband's funeral, but Mildred knew very little of those small social laws of English custom, and, it is to be feared, cared less. In this forest solitude, with the green dome of leaves above her head, and the thick velvet of the moss beneath her feet, she could breathe more freely than when she was indoors; but the more she thought over the events of the day the more difficult it seemed to her to come to any sort of decision. That Roland Ingram should inherit Ingram Chase she was quite resolved, but if she caused a deed of gift to be drawn up immediately it would do nothing towards lifting the cloud which hung over her own honour.

"If I had but someone to advise me—to tell me what I had better do!" she exclaimed, impatiently, as she walked on, feeling relieved

in the mere exercise, for it was the first time for weeks that she had been out of the house. An overwhelming sense of loneliness fell upon her. She had absolutely no friend, no relative. Sir Rupert had supplied the place of both, and now that he was gone she was utterly alone.

The wood was not a very extensive one, and before long Mildred had emerged from it, and was standing on the edge of a cliff, looking down below to where a brook ran noiselessly along, bubbling and eddying amongst the stones that lay in its bed, and tossing up clouds of spray as it dashed over the waterfall a little lower down. The descent was a sheer one of nearly a hundred feet, and the girl shuddered slightly as she looked at those steep rocks, and thought to herself what the consequences of one false step on her own part would involve, for with characteristic daring she had taken up her position on the very edge of the precipice.

"What would it matter if I did die?" she muttered, with a little pathetic smile; "no one would care, no one would miss me except Maud, perhaps. When people read of it in the papers they might say, 'Poor thing, she was very young!'" and then I should be absolutely forgotten."

At that moment she heard a sound behind her, and turned round quickly to see from whence it proceeded; and whether she took a step backwards or whether the earth on which she was standing gave way, she could not afterwards have told. She was conscious of a man's form some little distance away, of hearing the cry of horror that escaped his lips, and then she felt herself falling—falling.

She threw out her hands with the movement that is instinctive in moments of peril such as this; while the blood seemed rushing to her head, and a sudden blindness clouded her eyes; then there came a pause, and the next thing she knew was that her dress had caught in a tree growing out from one of the rocks, and that she was hanging on to a branch for dear life—the life that had seemed so bitter to her a few minutes ago, but to which she now clung with the desperate tenacity of youth.

Oh, the horror of that moment, when looking down, she saw below her the swift, rushing brook, with those cruel stones, against which, it might be, she was destined to be dashed; for she knew how great was her peril even yet. The branch she held to swayed with the weight of her form, and might, may must, ultimately give way, and precipitate her into the chasm. A prayer, voiceless, wordless, went up from her inmost heart, and, as if in answer to it, there came a man's voice from above.

"Hold on! I'll save you!" She dared not look up; she hardly dared draw a breath lest it might change her position, and thus throw extra weight on the fragile barrier that was all which interposed between her and eternity, but at the sound of those words she felt her heart bounding with renewed hope. She fancied there was a ring of assurance in the full, strong tones, as if the speaker knew himself to be capable of fulfilling his promise, and would do it. Still, she was aware how desperate a venture any attempt to save her would be, for the rocks were so steep and slippery that a goat could hardly climb them, and, moreover, they shelved over the chasm below, and one false step would be fatal.

She tried not to hope; she tried to prepare herself for the worst, and to reconcile herself to the idea of death, but the task was too hard for her; the merely human shrinking from that terrible shadow which, sooner or later, we all must face was so overpowering that it left room for no other thought, and the moments that followed seemed spun out into an interminable length, as if they had been hours instead of seconds.

At last she felt rather than saw a presence near her, then a strong arm was thrown around her waist, and a voice said,—

"Don't be frightened, you'll be all right in

few minutes. All you have to do is to keep up your courage, and hold tight to me."

Retaining a firm grasp on the trunk of the tree, the speaker clasped Mildred's arms round his neck so as to leave his own free, and then, slowly and carefully, and aiding himself with the hooked handle of his stick, he began the ascent.

Fortunately the girl was a very light weight, and he himself an exceptionally strong man, used to muscular exercises from his boyhood.

If this had not been the case he would never have succeeded in his bold venture, and even as it was he had to proceed with the utmost caution and deliberation, taking advantage of every shrub to hold by, and each crevice in the rocks in which he could insert his stick.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed at last, and half to himself, as he stood once more *terra firma*, and looked down anxiously into his companion's colourless face. "Are you hurt?" he added.

"Not seriously, only bruised a little, and frightened a good deal," she answered, with a brave attempt at a smile, as she drew herself away from his arms, and stood a short distance off, while trees and earth and sky seemed to dance in a sort of mist before her eyes. "I think"—unsteadily—"I had better sit down for a few minutes."

He led her to the fallen trunk of a tree, supporting her with his arm the while, and then went to a spring of water that trickled out of the rock near, and dipped his handkerchief in it.

Returning, he bathed her brow and hands, rather awkwardly, it is true, and as if the duty of restoring a terrified female to her senses were a novel one, so far as he was concerned.

"You are very good," she said, giving him a glance from her soft, dark eyes. "I—I can't tell you how grateful I am."

He cut her short with a slight laugh.

"Pray don't make any attempt to do so. I look upon myself as the debtor of a very lucky chance in that I have been enabled to render you service."

"You have saved my life."

"Then the thanks of your friends are due to me—not yours."

"My friends!" she repeated, rather bitterly, "I am afraid you would have to wait a long while before hearing them express any appreciation of your heroism!"

"Why?"

"Because I have not the happiness of possessing friends."

He looked at her in some wonder. The declaration on the part of one so young and fair as this brown-haired girl seemed a little strange. He did not see the wedding-ring on her finger, for her left hand lay in her lap, but the heavy crimp trimming on her dress indicated that she must be in mourning for some near relative, who she had probably lost very recently; and so, for fear of wounding her, he did not pursue the subject, much as he would have liked to understand what her words meant.

She was regarding him with an earnestness that impressed his every feature on her memory in a mental photograph that would never be erased, and this was what she saw. A tall, well-knit, muscular figure, erect and soldierly in bearing, a face tanned to a deep brown with constant exposure to the sun, a pair of keen, bright, but somewhat cynical-looking eyes, and a stern mouth, half covered by its thick moustache of tawny brown. His age might have been thirty-two or three, but he looked rather older.

A slight smile curved his lips as he noticed her scrutiny, and Mildred blushed a deep red that made her small, flower-like face incomparably lovely.

"I beg your pardon," she said, with the naive childishness that was part of her character. "I wanted to see what the man who saved my life was like."

This time he laughed outright.

"And are you satisfied with the result?"

"Quite," she answered, with the most per-

Tect gravity; and verily it seemed to her that in some such mould must the heroes of romance have been cast—those brave knights of the middle ages of whose courage and beauty she had read in the novels she had contrived to smuggle in at school.

He bowed, still smiling.

"I ought to feel very much flattered at your good opinion—as, indeed, I do;—my only regret is that I so little deserve it. By-the-bye, do you live far from here? I will see you safely home if I may."

This was the very last thing Mildred desired. She was perfectly aware of the gossip that would ensue if she were seen returning to the Chase with a strange gentleman on the day of her husband's funeral, and she did not feel herself brave enough to face Mr. Selwin's cold glance of disapproval, or Miss Pedley's softly expressed surprise.

"I would rather return alone, if you don't mind," she said, hesitatingly. "I do not wish anything to be known about my fall, and—and—" she stopped, hardly knowing how to continue.

"As you will. But do you think you are sufficiently recovered from the shock to be able to walk?"

"Oh, yes! I have not very far to go, and I feel all right now."

She rose to her feet in order to prove it, and held out her hand to bid him farewell.

It struck him that she made a very pretty picture, standing there against a background of gorgeous western sky, in which the sunset colours were glowing as bright as if the clouds had been jewelled. She looked so young, too—a mere child, with the most peach-like of complexions, and the sweetest eyes he had ever seen. He held her hand a minute longer than there was any strict necessity for.

"Good-bye," he said. "I wonder if we shall meet again?"

"Perhaps—who knows?"

But she did not tell him her name, as he hoped she would, and a minute later she had glided away, leaving him with his hat in his hand, watching until the trees hid her from his view.

(To be continued.)

GOOD ADVICE.—Carry religious principles into common life, and common life will lose its transitoriness. The world passeth away. The things seen are temporal. Soon business, with all its cares and anxieties, the whole "unprofitable stir and fever of the world," will be to us a thing of the past. But religion does better than sigh and moan over the perishableness of earthly things. It finds in them the seeds of immortality.

APPLES IN MYTHOLOGY.—Probably because the apple is such a beautiful fruit, and so common, it holds a great place in European tradition. Apples are to our legendary lore what peaches are to the Chinese. The fruit is as old as Homer, and in the fairy gardens of Phœacia he tells us that "apple grew ripe on apple and pear on pear" through all the circuit of the year. Inarts, the old, was tending his garden when Odysseus met him and reminded him of the little boy that had begged for so many apple trees "all for his own," and had now returned, a man tried in war and on the deep. It was an apple, the apple of discord, that caused all the Trojan woes, and but for this golden fruit Troy might still be a flourishing rival of Constantinople. Indeed, the whole Eastern question would have taken a different complexion, for the strife between Asia and Europe notoriously began with that apple of discord. For an apple Atalanta lost her maidenhood, and Eve paradise. They show different forbidden fruits in different countries; one especially, a monstrous yellow thing, about as tempting as a turnip. But in Northern Europe, at least, we have always been sure that for no fruit but an apple would Eve have listened to the serpent. The heathen Scandinavians, indeed, made apples the very fruit

of life and immortality. They were in the keeping of Iduna, wife of Bragi, and the gods of Asgard tasted them, as Horus (according to Diodorus) ate of the death-destroying drug of Isis. Then when they had tasted of the apples, the gods grew young again and forgot death. But Thiæsse, the giant, by the aid of Loki, seized Iduna and the apples of immortality, and then the gods grew old and grey and wrinkled (as in Giordano Bruno's satire), and the spring died out of the year. But Loki was made to restore the apples incorruptible, and spring came back, and the gods are as young as ever they were on Asgard.

WHITBY JET.—Whitby jet, both hard and soft, has always been considered better than any other; and no less a poet than Michael Drayton has sung of it out of his seventeenth century knowledge. The prominence given to it in the shop-window signs, and their emphasis that the lustrous black jewellery there displayed is made of it alone, excite a good deal of respect for the genuine Whitby article. But do coals really come from Newcastle, and brass buttons from Birmingham? Is Everton toffy a myth, and are Chelsea buns made at Stratford-le-Bow? Are Eccles cakes the produce of Ormskirk, and is the origin of Ormskirk gingerbread to be traced to Eccles? Is any truth left in the world? When we landed at Whitby we were told that Whitby jet principally comes from the Pyrenees! that the jet is found in such greater abundance in Spain, and obtained with so much greater ease, that the search for it in the scours of Yorkshire has been almost entirely abandoned. Thus were our hopes blighted, and our feelings more damped by disappointment than our clothing by the rain that copiously fell upon us day after day. A study of guide-books had led us to believe that we should see the jet-hunter following his precarious and perilous calling, swinging over the high cliffs, exploring the crannied rocks, and searching patiently along the detritus of the shore. We found that his occupation is gone, or, if not wholly given up, that it has become but a resource to be taken up when other things fail. The manufacture of the crude jet into various articles of adornment, continues to be almost a monopoly of Whitby, however, and it has been known there since 1598. Nearly an eleventh of the total population of the town (say between 1,300 and 1,400 persons) are engaged in it. And in the language of commerce the "turnover" is more than a hundred thousand pounds a year. The wages of the operatives are from five to thirty shillings a week. The crude jet is as much as possible like anthracite coal, and it comes from Spain in long wooden boxes. It is sawn into the sizes of the objects for which it is intended, and then shaped on a freestone wheel. Next the facets are put on, and it is carved into the desired pattern by men with knives, small chisels, and gongs. It is highly electrical, and, as the ancient poet has said of it—

"Tis black and shining, smooth, and ever light;
Tw'll draw up straws if rubbed till hit and bright.
Long before it was used for ornaments it was valued for its efficacy in "driving away devils, dissolving spells and enchantments, helping the despairing, banishing serpents, and when mixed with the marrow of a stag, in healing the bite of a snake." In small workshops, where the atmosphere is filled with a black or snuffy dust, the bits of anthracite which the jet resembles gradually take the shape of beads, flowers, fruit, and many pretty things, as they are dexterously wrought upon by the workmen, who often ply their tools without any set design before them; and when the carving is complete they are polished, being held against quickly revolving wheels, covered with chamois leather and a composition of rouge and oil. It is the rouge which produces the snuff-coloured dust, and gives many of the operatives a peculiar rustiness of appearance. The last thing of all is the "setting," which is done by sealing-wax and shellac. Then they are carded, and boxed in cotton wool, each article being guaranteed as one of "real Whitby jet."

THE BETROTHAL.

The graceful Old World ceremony of betrothal—or, as it was called in Scotland, "hand fastening"—still lingers, with all its attendant mystic ceremonies, in odd nooks and corners of Europe, although in England they attach no special importance to the act, which has become one of a private, unceremonious character. But it was not so in the olden time, when the Church and the national law recognized it as one of a solemn and stately character, in which the interchange of rings, the formally binding kiss and the joining of hands, were all duly witnessed, festively celebrated, ratified by the presence of a priest and by a written record.

The violation of such a contract was then a summarily punishable offence, without providing a profitable breach of promise case for the lawyers, or a long, costly, legal trial, as provided for by Act 26, George II., c. 33.

Whoever declined matrimony after being betrothed was simply subjected to all the terrors of ecclesiastical excommunication, than which nothing was more terrible. We find betrothal laws were given by the great Jewish law-giver, Moses. In ancient Rome they existed, defining the *sponsalia* as a solemn promise of future marriage, giving the woman a new title, *sponsa*, and also the man, *sponsus*. It could be undertaken at any time after the parties had attained the seventh year of their age, and even, under certain conditions, in their absence.

In England the Reformation brought the old betrothing customs into disuse, but they long lingered, and in some parts of England, until quite recently, were recognizable in curious rustic ceremonies. Perhaps the only relic of them now in use takes the form of betrothal rings; but they no longer have the mystic significance which of old caused them to be regarded with superstitious reverence.

The Prince of Wales, it may be remembered, presented such a ring to the illustrious and amiable princess now his wife—a ring in which the initial letters of its six stones formed the pet name the Princess Alexandra had given him, "Bertie." It is to this ring of betrothal that Portia refers in the quaint lines:—

"If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to retain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring."

Some of these betrothal rings (*sponsalium annulus*) were two or three in number, fastened together and called "gimmel." At the ceremony of betrothal these rings were separated—one the intended bride retained, one the future bridegroom wore, and the third, if a third existed, was given to the friend who was to be the groom's best man. On the marriage day these three rings were reunited and worn by the bride. Hence the modern custom of "keeper" rings worn over the wedding-ring. To these rings Dryden refers in the lines:—

"A curious artist wrought 'em
With joints as not to be perceived;
Yet they were both each other's counterpart
(Her part had Juan inscribed, and his had
Lada—
You know those names were theirs), and in the
midst
A heart divided in two halves was plac'd.
Now, if the rivets of these rings inclosed
Fit not each other, I have forged this lie."

Herrick also refers to a ring of the same kind in his "Hesperides":—

"Thou sent'st to me a true-love knot, but I
Returned a ring of gimmers, to imply
Thy love hath one knot—mine a triple tie."

To let go one's friends is one thing, but to be forced to feel that they have let you go, in an unkind way, and that you cannot think quite as well of them as you used to do, is another, and much harder trial.

A FOLK-LORE LEGEND.

"Come back to us, mother," the little ones cried;
"Come back to us, mother dear."
And they flung themselves on the grave at her side:
"There's nobody loves us here."

"The stepmother beats us, and starves us for food;
Come back to us, mother dear.
Do you slumber so deep—oh! we'll be so good—
So deep that you do not hear?"

The mother she came in the dead of the night,

She washed them and combed their hair,
And gave them to eat of the wheaten bread white,
And dressed them in garments fair.

They climbed in her lap, and they sat at her feet.

They kissed her with laughter gay.
She sang them to sleep with a lullaby sweet,
Till cock-crow called her away.

And though ev'ry night they lie smiling in bed,

With tears on their lashes fair,
Think not they are sad—they are happy instead:

Their mother is with them there!

C. A.

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR JOCELYN LEIGH never till his life's end quite forgot those moments when he waited for his children's governess. The schoolroom was so associated with Nell that everything in it seemed to speak of her. He tried to steel his heart against her, and yet he felt he must relent at sight of the slender, girlish form.

But he was roused from his reverie by a piercing shriek, such as uneducated women often give when surprised, and the maid Nancy came rushing in.

"Miss Stuart's not there, Sir Jocelyn."

"Well, find her, and give her my message."

"You don't understand, Sir Jocelyn," repeated the girl, frantically. "She not been there all night, the bed's not been slept in."

She turned as though to go back to the room, and her master followed her. It was just as she had said, the pretty room bore no marks of occupation, but, strangest part of all, on the bed lay the cloth mantle and little black hat she had worn the day before, when she was told harshly by himself she must leave his house.

"You see, sir," said Nancy, with an air of triumphant conviction, "she's not there. I remember now she was not in the school-room when I brought up supper, so just thinking she'd gone to bed I took it down again."

"And you never thought of asking if Miss Stuart was ill?" inquired Sir Jocelyn, irritably.

"Never sir! Nurse always saw to her if she was ill. Nurse never thought she could do enough for Miss Stuart."

Sir Jocelyn went straight upstairs to the nursery. Its mistress, a quiet, middle-aged woman, said afterwards that never, not even when his wife lay in her coffin, had his face looked at as looked now.

He closed the door.

"An awful thing has happened, nurse!"

"The children, Sir Jocelyn? Why—"

"The children are well enough," he interrupted her, testily. "Miss Stuart has disappeared."

"Do you mean she has run away, sir?"

"I mean that she has not passed the night

at Alandyke; that no one has seen her since yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, yes sir!" interposed Nurse, cheerfully. "I saw her quite late in the evening, when you were all at dinner. She told me her head ached badly, and she was going out for a breath of air."

"And this was?"

"Between seven and eight, I should think, sir. I remember, because I met her on the stairs, she had a thick crimson shawl thrown over her head and shoulders. I couldn't help thinking what a pretty young creature she looked."

Sir Jocelyn passed one hand across his brow.

"I can't understand it."

"She couldn't go away like that," returned Nurse, "without even a hat or jacket; besides, she loved the little ladies too well to leave them unless she could help it."

Poor Sir Jocelyn knew not what to say. He only felt that pretty Nell, with her childish face and big grey eyes, might be in dire peril without his being able to help her.

Fortunately the nurse was a woman of sound, practical common sense; she had been at Alandyke for years, and she understood her master better far than did his stately sister-in-law, Lady Daryl.

"There must have been an accident in the grounds, Sir; it stands to reason Miss Stuart would not have gone beyond them with only a shawl over her dress—perhaps she fell down over some of the rough ground, or a stray shot from one of the poachers may have touched her. Depend upon it, Sir Jocelyn, it's in the grounds you'll find her."

The thought of how he might find her, her soft hair disordered, her face bruised and perhaps blood-stained, almost unmanned the Baronet. She might be weak and erring, she might have lured Isabel's lover away from his allegiance, but for all that she had crept into Jocelyn Leigh's heart; he could not bear to think of her peril.

"You're quite upset, sir, with the shock," put in Nurse, sympathetically; "and what Lady Daryl will say I can't think."

"I must go and tell her."

"And you'll send to search the grounds, sir; the poor young lady may be lying there, though I'm thinking she'd hardly be alive after such a night as we've had."

By an instant effort the Baronet nerved himself for his task; he summoned the butler, and directed that two strong servants should at once be dispatched to scour the grounds, that every foot of ground should be well and closely searched. This settled, he was walking over to look for his sister-in-law, when he found himself confronted with Guy Vernon.

"I want to speak to you if you please, Sir Jocelyn!" said the young man, very stiffly.

"You can't!" was the rejoinder, "I am too much upset. I am going to find my sister, to break some most unpleasant news to her!"

"Lady Daryl knows!"

"She knows?"

"Certainly, it was she who told me! I must speak to you, Sir Jocelyn, after the manner in which I have been treated! it is my due!"

Sir Jocelyn yielded; he was too much upset to be firm, but certainly his instincts were against the interview. He felt as if he hated Guy.

"I am leaving Alandyke immediately!" said Guy, very stiffly; "but, first, I must express my astonishment at Isabel's behaviour. With our wedding-day actually fixed I consider she has treated me atrociously."

The Baronet raised his eyebrows.

"Did you bring me here to speak about Isabel? I don't think I can promise to remonstrate with her after what I saw of your conduct yesterday—besides, I don't see anything to find fault with in her behaviour!"

"Nothing to find fault with!" Mr. Vernon's eyes literally blazed. "Why we have been engaged for years and years. The settlements were ready to sign, and the wedding day fixed!"

"Well, what has she done?"

"Is it possible you don't know! ut you must have heard. You yourself spol' of the terrible affair—of course, you meant Isabel's elopement."

Sir Jocelyn stared. "Isabel's what?"

"Elopement; I don't know a better word for it! She left Alandyke last night with that artist fellow."

"Don't abuse my guests, Vernon. Do you really mean Isabel has left the house?"

"This seems to say so!" said the young man, bitterly, and he put a letter into Sir Jocelyn's hand. It was very short and simple.

"DEAR GUY,—I never loved you, and you never regarded me as anything but a cousin, whose large fortune made it desirable you should marry her. Six months ago I discovered my mistake, and learned what love was; but for your sake and my plighted word I might have let things take their course, until the enclosed, being sent to me accidentally by your father, showed me I need have no compunction on your account at breaking our engagement. I have, therefore, agreed to marry the only man I could ever love, and when this is in your hands I shall be his wife. Don't think too hardly of me; remember, you set me the example of deceit by writing such a letter to your father at the very time you were professing complete devotion to ISABEL."

In perfect silence Sir Jocelyn read this letter to the end, then he held out his hand.

"Where is the enclosure?"

"I burnt it."

"What was its nature?"

"I believe I told my father of an attachment I had formed, and begged him to help me to overcome the obstacles to its ending in marriage."

Sir Jocelyn felt inclined to knock him down, but he resisted the temptation.

"How did it fall into Isabel's hands?"

"My father inclosed it by mistake."

"A lucky mistake for her! I think Bell has done nothing she need blush for. After reading of your attachment to another, how could she marry you?"

"She need not have thrown me over at the last moment." Then in an injured tone, "You are the first guardian I ever knew who applauded his ward for sloping!"

"I must decline to discuss my niece with you. She may have failed in consideration towards you, but certainly you set her the example."

"That fellow Yorke, I don't believe he's a penny a-year he doesn't earn."

"All the more credit to him for earning it."

"Well, I didn't expect you to turn against me, Sir Jocelyn. I'm sure Lady Daryl was far kinder."

"She didn't see you as I saw you yesterday."

"Are you always going to harp on that?"

"I don't know."

The young man's face changed suddenly. It softened inexpressibly, and a strange, sad regret took the place of the sullen anger.

"Can't you see it, Leigh? Don't you understand why I'm so riled with Isabel?"

"No."

"Don't you see, if she had only been brave and spoken out her mind a few months ago, I could have been happy. The struggle between love and ambition was a hard one, Heaven knows, but Belle's money tempted me. If she'd only told me last December she never meant to marry me I should have been true to my darling, and all this misery would never have been!"

"Do you mean you knew Miss Stuart before she came to Alandyke? Your words would imply as much. And yet—"

"I knew her," said Guy, humbly, almost brokenly. "I met her last autumn at some cousins of my mother's. She was teaching the girls music. Well, I loved her, and I told her so."

"And she?"

"Oh! the eagerness of the question.

"She loved me then, I am sure of it! Whatever happened afterwards, she loved me then."

"And—
"We used to meet of an evening in dark, quiet roads, at the railway station, anywhere. Things went on so till last December; and then she told me she could bear the deception no longer. I must let her tell her mother and sister, or all should be over between us!"

"And you parted?"

"Yes. I met her here in January. I don't know which of us was most amazed at the encounter, but she knew the truth then that I was engaged to Isabel, and would not listen to me. I've tried again and again, but with the same result. She told me I had killed her love, I who had never prized it properly until I lost it. I persecuted her with my importunities. When you saw us yesterday she had gone out to avoid me. She little thought she was walking into the lion's mouth. I tried again yesterday. I hardly knew what I wished, what I hoped, but she was inflexible. She told me, for all time, she could be nothing to me."

"Then you knew nothing of her disappearance?" said Sir Jocelyn, more kindly. "When you met me I was hurrying to Lady Daryl, not to tell her about Isabel (I had not heard that), but to break the news that Miss Stuart had left Alandyke."

"Left Alandyke!"

"Aye! I had threatened to send her away. Perhaps she was determined I should not have the chance. Anyway, she's gone."

"But where?"

"I don't know."

Guy Vernon looked full into Sir Jocelyn's face. His own was white and cold as marble.

"If she is dead, if in her despair she has taken her own life, I am her murderer. I have killed her, just as surely as though I had put a bullet into her heart."

"Nonsense!"

"They were so poor!" said Guy, gravely. "She would have a scant welcome at home. Her mother was not like her, and Beatrice was a child."

That day was full of excitement to the guests at Alandyke. Very soon after breakfast it was announced that the young heiress had eloped on the verge of her wedding-day, and that the pretty, childlike governess, whose sweet face they all admired, had mysteriously disappeared.

Regarding Belle, no one felt very much astonished. She and Mr. Vernon had never behaved as proper lovers.

A short, manly note soon arrived from Harold Yorke, enclosing the certificate of his marriage, and telling Sir Jocelyn he was aware his bride forfeited her large fortune by marrying without his consent, but that he was not afraid of the future. The treasure of Belle's love would make him brave to fight life's battle.

"Is it really so?" asked pretty Mrs. Rosister, demurely at breakfast the morning after that day of surprises. "Does Mr. Yorke really win a portionless bride?"

"No," said Sir Jocelyn, promptly. "Belle was religiously brought up in the belief, and I never cared to disturb it, as I thought it would protect her from fortune-hunters; but, as a matter-of-fact, she takes everything just the same. It was to be settled strictly on herself, and must descend to her eldest son; that's all."

Guy had left the Castle, so there was no scruple about discussing the Yorke's prospects on account of his feelings.

"I think Belle has shown herself a clever little woman!" pronounced Lord Charteris. "I liked Harold Yorke. There was the right stuff in him."

"But there were no suspicions, no excitement," lamented the widow. "I didn't think an elopement could happen so peacefully."

Lord Charteris took the answer on himself.

"I think, madam, the lesser calamity has been forgotten in the greater one. We know Mrs. Yorke is safe and happy, that she has married a good man, though her way of doing it has been a trifle odd. Now, of that other girl who left us the same evening no trace has been discovered. She may be dead!"

"Wouldn't it be a good thing, poor creature?" said the lady, with a pretty shrug of her shoulders. "Of course, it is all very sad and that, but she had no home or friends. If she was in trouble, it was almost a happy thing that she should take her life before her misery became known."

The lady's speech met with little sympathy at Alandyke. Sir Jocelyn's indignant reply was ready, but he saw his sister was going to say something, and waited till she had finished.

"I think you are hard on Miss Stuart," said Lady Daryl, quietly. "We have no right to assume that she was in sorrow or disgrace. She came to me at the recommendation of a lady who keeps a flourishing school, and who loved her dearly. If she were unhappy at Alandyke, Mrs. Rosister, she could always have found a home with her."

"She didn't take her life because she was homeless, or friendless either!" thundered the Earl of Carruthers, looking at Mrs. Rosister with anger flashing in his eye. "I believe I was the last person here who saw her alive, and I happen to know that her future plans were carefully arranged—that the thought of suicide never once occurred to her."

"You saw her?" asked half-a-dozen voices. "When?"

"Within two hours of her leaving Alandyke I was with her over an hour. If you want to know what business I had in your schoolroom, Lady Daryl, I'll tell you. I went there to ask Miss Stuart to become Countess of Carruthers!"

The company gasped. They really could not help it.

"She refused," returned the General, gravely. "She told me she should never marry any one unless she loved them. She promised, however, to let me be her friend; and as she had contrived to offend Sir Jocelyn" (the Baronet winced), "I offered her an introduction to my niece, who would, I knew, be very glad of such a sweet girl as an inmate of her house. So you see, Mrs. Rosister, your theory fails to the ground at once. Miss Stuart may have had troubles—most women have—but she had none that necessitated her taking her life. If she must leave Alandyke, another home as luxurious was open to her, and she knew quite well that in time Sir Jocelyn must learn his mistake, and be ready to reinstate her as governess to his children."

"I have learned it now," said the Baronet, sadly. "If Miss Stuart could be found, I should be only too glad to see her back in her old place!"

A breathless silence fell on everyone. That a portionless, nursery governess had refused the proud position of Countess of Carruthers almost took their breath away. Sir Jocelyn smiled a little to himself; it was so like his dear, old friend. Well, perhaps little Nell would have been happier as his wife—at least, they would have been spared all this terrible uncertainty about her fate; and yet, in his heart of hearts, the Baronet knew that even suspense was easier to bear than to have seen her at the old General's side, his ring upon her finger, his children, perhaps, as time went by, in her arms.

The search had been vigorously pursued all the preceding day—not a yard of the premises but had been scoured thoroughly, but still no clue had been discovered. Nothing in the world had been found to throw any light upon the fate of Helena Stuart.

After the nurse saw her leave the house, wrapped in the crimson shawl, there seemed no trace of her. That she should have gone far in such a costume seemed impossible; but Sir Jocelyn caused inquiries to be made in all directions. These, however, were answered by the lodge keepers, who declared positively that they locked the gates at seven, and after that hour they were only twice called to open them—once for a young lady, who said she was Miss Vernon's maid, and was hurrying to Alandyke Station to catch the London train,

and the second time for the dog-cart which took Mr. Yorke to Wharton.

Of course the "young lady" was Isabel herself; the description and time tallied. Questioned again and again the lodge-keepers kept to their answer: No one else—man, woman, or child—had passed through the gates that night.

Sir Jocelyn and Lord Charteris together went down to the lodge-keepers, but even they could elicit no other answer.

"You see, sir," said the widow, addressing her master, "we must have noticed Miss Stuart had she come here. We know her so well; she had been by so often with the little ladies, and she had a face not easily forgotten."

"But," persisted Lord Charteris, "my good woman, you must listen to facts. Miss Stuart left the house at seven o'clock in the evening, and she has never been seen since. Unless she passed through one of the lodge-gates she must be in the grounds now."

The woman again protested that Nell had never passed through the Lodge gates. She put one hand up to her head, as though she were trying to think; after a little while she spoke.

"That's where it is, my lord. I'm sure it's come to me time after time just what you've said; but still, for all that, she didn't pass through those gates, and Morgan at the other ledge is just as sure she didn't pass through his. I can't see but one thing for it."

"I can't see anything at all!" said Sir Jocelyn, eagerly. "My good woman, speak out!"

"I don't like to, Sir Jocelyn. You see, the place have always been a sore subject with you, sir."

"Speak out!" returned the master; "never mind vexing me. Nothing can vex me more than this awful mystery!"

"Then I think the poor young lady must just have wandered through the grounds towards the lake, and then—"

"Not fallen in?" cried Sir Jocelyn. "Charteris, why did we never think of that?"

"Oh, no! If she'd fallen in there'd have been noise and to do. No, I think she just went round the lake, and then on to Goody's Cottage."

Sir Jocelyn trembled. Evidently "Goody's Cottage" had strange and painful associations for him.

"Goody's Cottage!" quoth the General, surprised. "Why, where's that?"

Mrs. Walsh explained it was a pretty, little house, rather better than a cottage, and it stood near the banks of the lake. It was really in the Alandyke grounds; all its windows faced them, but its front door was the other way, opening into the high road to Wharton. It was a very, very old place, and when Lady Alberts came home a bride had been given to an old servant of hers, who seemed to be known by the name of Goody.

"She was my wife's foster-mother," said Sir Jocelyn, slowly, "and Berta was passionately attached to her. Her having the cottage at all was rather a farce, for she spent most of her time in our nursery, until a few weeks before my wife's death."

He stopped abruptly. Both his listeners looked anxious for the end of his explanation. The true reason for Goody's dismissal had been a marvel for years to Mrs. Walsh.

"I never liked the woman," continued Sir Jocelyn, "and I sent her away. I know she vowed vengeance on me at the time. To please my poor wife I promised the cottage should never be taken away from her; and I believe she's lived there ever since."

"Ever since, sir," replied Mrs. Walsh. "She don't look a day older now, though she's very strange in her head at times. She's got a niece come to live with her; but she never lets her speak to anyone, and the blinds in the house have never been raised since my lady died."

"The woman must be mad!"

"No, my lord. She's sane enough, only she

do talk strangely. I'm thinking if Miss Stuart wanted to pass out of the grounds unknown to us she'd only have to knock at Goody's garden door, and walk through the passage out into the Wharton road."

"But surely the cantankerous old woman you describe wouldn't be civil enough to let her?"

Mrs. Walsh shook her head.

"It's only a fancy of mine, my lord. I may be mistaken; only when every yard of the grounds had been searched, I did think it was odd no one thought of Goody's Cottage."

The gentleman walked away together—Sir Jocelyn, his eyes bent on the ground. Lord Carruthers looking a little more hopeful.

"Do you think there's anything in it, Leigh?"

"Nothing! That woman, Goody, is almost a fiend in human shape!"

"Strong language!"

"Not too strong. She possessed more influence over my poor wife than many mothers have over their children; and, from first to last, she hated me. She actually never raises a blind fold for fear she should see me. I can't help it, General; it may be superstitious, but I hold that woman in horror. I can't go there. Will you venture alone?"

"But—"

"She would tell me nothing. She will tell you nothing if she thinks it is to please me. You don't know what she is, General—a very fine inhuman shape!"

It was not an alluring description; but the Earl was undaunted. He had faced many dangers in his military career; he was not going to be frightened by an old woman, and he said so pretty plainly.

Taking leave of his friend he walked off to the lonely cottage, taking notice that the blinds were lowered, as Mrs. Walsh had said. He gave a prolonged double knock at the door—the door in the Alandyke grounds, be it understood, not the one which opened on the road to Wharton.

He was a little disconcerted when he remembered he had never heard the old woman's name. She might be offended if she heard him inquire for her as "Goody"; but this difficulty was solved, for he felt sure that the person who opened the door was the one he sought. Her hard, sinister features, the dainty nicely of her dress, convinced him this was "Goody."

"Good morning," said the Earl, with his inherent courtesy. "I have come to ask you a favour."

"Do you come from Sir Jocelyn Leigh?" asked the dame, in a high-pitched voice. "Has he sent you to ask for it?" she pronounced the "it" with a great stress upon it. "Because, if you have you can spare yourself the trouble, he will never have it. I've kept my secret five years, and I shall go on keeping it!"

Lord Carruthers began to think his friend had not been quite frank with him.

"I have not come from Sir Jocelyn. My favour is quite a personal one to myself."

"I hate strangers!"

"I ought not to be a stranger to you. Lady Adela was a great friend of mine. You cannot think how I miss her at Alandyke."

"Ah!" mollymawked.

"So if you can answer my inquiry remember you will be helping a friend of hers."

"What do you want?"

"About three days ago a young lady disappeared suddenly from Alandyke."

"Aye, the governess!"

"You have heard of it?"

"Aye, poor young lassie. I reckon Sir Jocelyn was hard on her; he's a hard man always."

"Well, Miss Stuart left Sir Jocelyn's house, and all efforts to trace her have failed. The strangest part is she wore no hat or jacket, nothing but a thick red shawl covered over her head. Now she could not go far in that."

"No."

"And no one saw her leave the grounds.

Both the lodge-keepers deny letting her pass through their lodge gates."

"And they're truth-tellers, both on 'em."

"There is only one other means of egress. Did you let her pass through your house out into the Wharton road?"

The woman looked into his face.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Can't you see the anxiety we are in. If this young lady has been killed" (Goody shuddered) "it is Sir Jocelyn's place to avenge the murderer."

"And if he found her alive?"

"She would return to Alandyke."

"In disgrace!"

"Not so, she would remain there in all honour. The children—Lady Adela's children, remember—love her dearly. Their father respects her."

"Does he?"

"And if he found her he could alight the anxiety of her relations—she has a mother and sister. Think what they will feel when week after week passes and no news comes of her."

"Perhaps she's with them now."

"We can't find out. We don't even know their address."

That was what she was aiming at; that, once learnt, she did not mind speaking the trembling on her lips.

"Yes, I saw her. She wanted me to tell anyone, but you say no one will be hard on her. I let her out at my front door, and she took the road to Wharton."

Lord Carruthers waited to hear no more. Goody shut the door on him and went back to her work muttering—

"It was a lie, but it saved the property for my darling's children; if once Sir Jocelyn got to know this girl was ill he'd fetch her mother, and then things must come out, and it'll be nigh as bad as though he'd got the poison book. That was a pleasant spoken gentleman, too I'm sorry I deceived him, but then it was for the best, and I dare say she'll pull round best here in the quiet, and I'll see to her fine."

She opened the door of a small room on the ground-floor, and went in with hushed step and bated breath. There, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, her lovely hair floating wildly over her shoulders, her hands, white and transparent, lay the girl whose loss lay heavy on Sir Jocelyn's heart. The cruel fever was sapping her strength, the ravings of delirium had betrayed a little of her story. Goody really persuaded herself it was a kindness to shield the girl from the man who seemed to have been as cruel to her, and so she sent Lord Carruthers away with a falsehood, and hid Helena Stuart in her own house, tossing recklessly on her pillows, moaning with pain and anguish, hovering between life and death.

Goody was a skilful nurse; her niece, in abject fear of her, would keep the secret faithfully. Nell would lack nothing care and tendance could give her; there was a certain rough sincerity about the eccentric woman which would compel her to do her best for her self-imposed charge, even though she could not wish the girl really to recover, since Goody not only shared Sir Jocelyn's secret, but knew, which he did not, the strange tie which linked little Nell with the mystery of Alandyke.

Lord Carruthers hurried back to Alandyke; he met its master in the hall.

"Well," was Sir Jocelyn's greeting, "what success? But, of course, you have failed. I don't think, General, that woman could be civil to anyone who came from me."

The old nobleman answered, with a well-satisfied smile, as though proud of his success—

"Oh, I managed her nicely, but it wasn't an easy matter. She owned at last that she saw Miss Stuart on that eventful evening; in fact, she let her pass through her house to the Wharton road."

"Do you think she is to be trusted, General?"

"She seemed a very practical woman, Leigh, quite rational, except on one point, and that—forgive me—is a vindictive hatred of yourself."

"Perhaps she enlightened you as to its origin?"

"No."

"Ah, well, I suppose the matter must rest there. We can't disprove the woman's words, and yet, do what I will, I can't believe them."

"You carry prejudice too far," testily.

"Is it prejudice? You don't know how that girl's fate weighs on me, General. I should be thankful to believe she really went to Wharton, and started thence homewards—but I can't."

"Why?"

"Because the mystery of her attire is still unsolved. This is a primitive place, but even here young women wear bonnets or hats outside. That a girl could go from here to Wharton with only a crimson shawl over her head, and not attract general observation, seems incredible."

"Are you sure she had nothing else?"

"Positive. My nurse is a woman of great observation; besides, poor child, her wardrobe was a scanty one, and all her outdoor garments are in their place. There are no shops where she could have procured anything; besides, shops would not have been open at that time of night."

The Earl looked troubled.

"I thought Goody's story so satisfactory," he said, gravely. "Jocelyn, I believe I'm an idiot. I actually felt proud of making her tell me."

"You have done something," returned the younger man, gratefully, "you have done away with the fear that she met with an accident in the grounds. I can walk about my park now without wondering in which part of it she met her death. You have proved she left Alandyke uninjured—but the rest is uncertainty."

"I daresay she has gone home."

"She can't have gone home. Allowing that she thought of travelling to London without a bonnet she had no money; her purse was here in her jacket-pocket."

"Really?"

"Yes. Besides, two letters have come since she went, both with the Camberwell post-mark. If she had gone home her friends would not have troubled to write to her."

"What shall you do with them?"

"With what?"

"The letters."

"Keep them awhile. I couldn't write to Mrs. Stuart, even if I would. I haven't her address."

"I had it once," said the General. "Miss Stuart was speaking of her little sister one day, and I made her give it me, but I never had a good memory for such things. It was some road in Camberwell, I fancy."

Camberwell's a large place; but, indeed, my lord, I think it's best not to write until we have something more positive to say. Better her mother and sister should think her a little neglectful and unkind than that they should know the awful mystery which hangs over her fate."

So it was settled. Lady Daryl wrote to an agency in London, and an irreproachable widow lady of great learning and accomplishments was sent to Alandyke as governess to Adela and Mab; then his visitors, having all departed, and the old house seeming desolate, Sir Jocelyn committed his daughters to their aunt's care, and departed on a foreign tour.

"Remember, Hortensia," he said as they sat at breakfast the last morning of his sojourn at Alandyke, "if Miss Stuart returns, I want you to receive her with all kindness. Whatever she may have done, wherever she has been, it was I who drove her to it by my harshness."

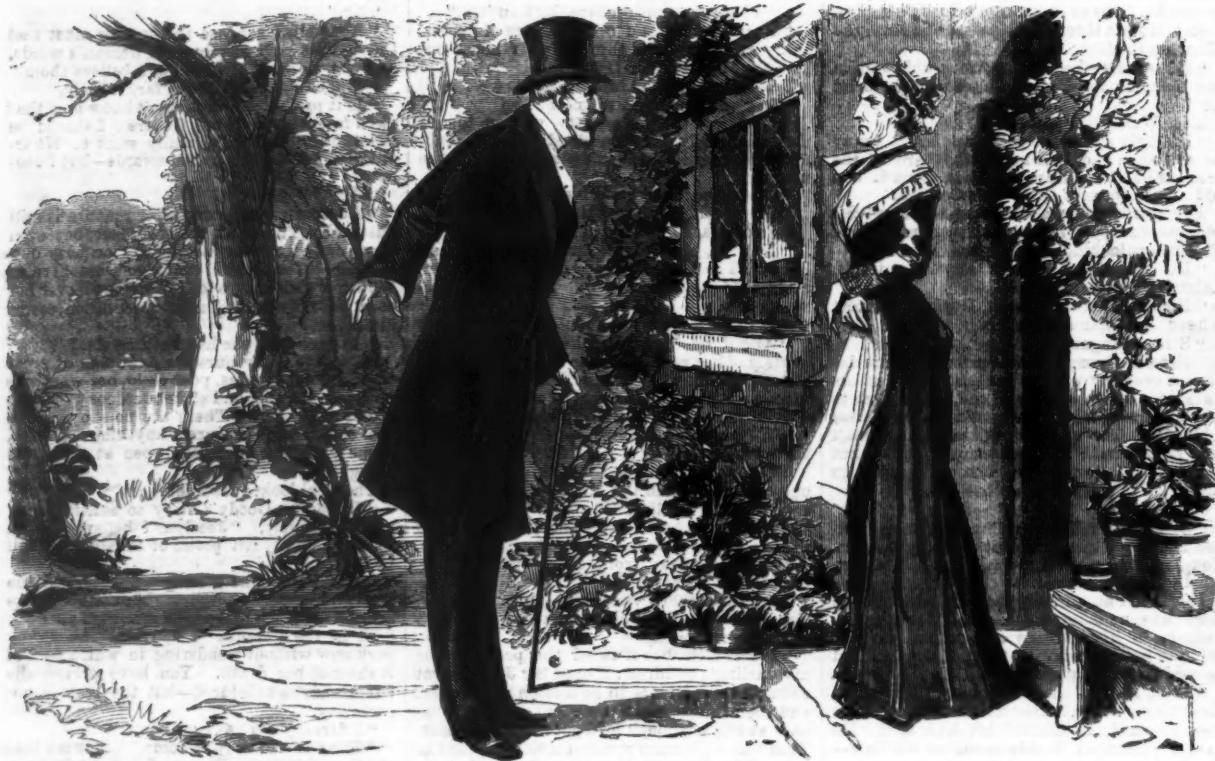
Lady Daryl stared.

"I can't understand you! You were going to send her away in disgrace, and now—"

"And now I have discovered my suspicions were unfounded; now I know that in thought, word and deed, Helena Stuart was what she seemed—an innocent, noble-hearted girl!"

Lady Daryl did not half like this prissie.

"Well, I wish she hadn't done it, and that



[SEEKING FOR NEWS.]

Harold Yorke had not persuaded Isabel to slope with him. The house has been as dull as ditchwater ever since. Just when it was to have been filled with Isabel's wedding guests, you walk off no one knows whither, and I am left here with no society but two bits of children."

Sir Jocelyn sighed.

"I dare say it is dull for you," he admitted, "but you can ask anyone you like to stay with you."

"I can't!" snapped Lady Daryl. "I'm getting tired of answering questions as to why you don't live at home. Really, Jocelyn, for the sake of your own reputation, you might give your children and your home a little more of your time and attention!"

The Baronet passed his hand weakly across his brow. It was a common gesture with him when he was annoyed.

"I don't think my reputation suffers!"

"It does, people say all kinds of things."

"That I am an unnatural father! I can stand that, I think, Hortensia."

"They say you must have some pretty strong attraction abroad. I may as well tell you, Jocelyn, you will hear it from someone. It is rumoured that somewhere on the continent resides a lady who has usurped poor Berta's place!"

Sir Jocelyn stared.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I can't help it, Jocelyn; it is bad enough for me to hear it. They say you are haunted by my sister's spirit, and that for fear of that you daren't marry the woman who was her rival. They say the knowledge of your misdeeds broke her heart, and that old nurse whom you dismissed without rhyme or reason was in the secret."

Sir Jocelyn rose, anger in every feature.

"And yet let them bring such gossip to you, Hortensia?"

"Certainly not; but I know that it is rife in all quarters—I know that your repeated absences give colour to it!"

"And you believed it yourself?"

She shook her head.

"I don't believe a syllable of the scandal! I think you were an exemplary husband; but, I confess, your own actions seem to confirm the rumours to people who do not know you as well as I do."

"How do you mean?"

Lady Daryl did not spare him.

"You have seemed like a changed man since Berta's death, and yet you never struck me as a very devoted couple! You must have some reason for roaming about so. I have invited the most charming women I could find, and you have never paid them the least attention. I came to the conclusion, long ago, that you loved someone too lowly born to be Lady Leigh of Alandyke."

"You are right!" he said, hoarsely, "and yet, oh! so wrong! My wife's deathblow was not act or deed of mine. When the boy was taken she lost all wish to live—she fast pined away. I know I am changed, but neither Berta's death nor a new love has done the work. Hortensia, you must bear with me. I am a man with an awful secret; night and day it weighs on me; night and day my burden seems heavier than I can bear."

White to the very lips was Lady Daryl.

"Jocelyn, you frighten me—what is it?"

The great drops of perspiration stood on his brow like beads.

"I cannot tell you, Hortensia, only hear this and believe me! My life is one of such intolerable anguish that, but for the children's sakes, I would gladly lie it down. There is no peace for me anywhere; but at Alandyke my misery is at the worst—this place for me seems to be under a curse. We will never speak of this again!" he said, in a different tone, "for your sister's sake I know you will not betray my confidence. At least now you will understand why I am away so much—constant change is almost a necessity to me. Three months passed here would kill me."

And the next day the fashionable papers chronicled that Sir Jocelyn Leigh, Baronet, of Alandyke, Yorkshire, had left London for Dover, *en route* for the continent. Little did those who read the announcement guess the weary secret he carried with him—little did the fellow-travellers who admired the tall, distinguished-looking man, imagine that he was leaving his native land because he seemed to breathe more freely—to feel his haunting fears less away from the lovely estate men called his home, and which yet to him was full of bitterness pain.

(To be continued.)

A PERSIAN TALISMAN.—Talismans, spells and charms of all sorts are much relied upon in Persia in all cases of illness. "During the cholera in Shiraz," writes the author of the "Land of the Lion and the Sun," "I was attending the daughter of the high priest, who was sitting surrounded by a crowd of friends petitioners, and parasites. He was writing charms against the cholera. I, out of curiosity, asked him for one. It was simply a strip of paper, on which was written a mere scribble, which meant nothing at all. I took it and put it carefully away. He told me that, when attacked by cholera, I had but to swallow it and it would prove an effectual remedy. I thanked him very seriously and went my way. That day he called and presented me with two sheep and a huge cake of sugar candy weighing thirty pounds. I did not quite see why he gave me the present; but he laughingly told me that my serious reception of his talisman had convinced the many bystanders of its great value, and a charm desired by an unbelieving European doctor must be potent indeed. You see, you might have laughed at my beard; you did not. I am grateful. But if I could only say that you had eaten my charm, ah, then!" "Well," I replied, "say so if you please, and our interview ended."



[STRANGELY MET.]

NOVELLETTE.

NEVER TO PART.

CHAPTER I.

"Come, Fluffy, don't be lazy; you must perform this morning before I give you a morsel of breakfast!" said Valence Eldon, trying to assume a serious tone to a little white Persian kitten, whose snowy neck was bedecked with blue ribbon, and lay stretched out on the rug, basking in the warmth of a blazing fire.

It was a pretty home picture, this raw, but bright spring morning. A tall, slight girl in soft grey cashmere robes, just relieved by a few knots of ruby velvet that tried to rival the full crimson lips that were parted, exposing the little pearly teeth; her rich golden hair braided back from her white brow lay in rich coils that seemed almost too heavy for the graceful little head to bear, and no doubt taxed the skill of her lady's maid.

She was kneeling, playing with her pet, but there was an indefinable careless grace in every attitude and motion.

Everything bespoke wealth and taste in the room where silk brocades and rich claret velvet curtains draped the windows, and choice flowers lay lavishly about in rare old vases and Dresden china jardinières, filling the atmosphere with fragrance; three sides of the apartment were filled with richly-bound volumes, and a writing-table loaded with magazines told its own tale.

This was the library, and the favourite room in the whole house with Valence Eldon, who was never happier than when lounging on the inviting couches immersed in her favourite authors, or teasing her kitten, a new craze of this spoilt child of fortune, whose life had been one veritable dream of roses.

"There, that's very good!" this as the kitten jumped over her jewelled hands. "Now again, Fluffy, that is beautiful. Why, you are almost perfect, but you haven't done yet," this as the

snowy little creature tried to scramble into her lap. "Your second lesson, come; die prettily, but shut your naughty pink eyes; they must not be open on so solemn a time," shaking her pretty head sagely.

"What on earth is the child doing?" ejaculated Mr. Eldon, as he entered the library.

"Teaching Fluffy to die, papa; but don't make a noise, there's a dear, or you will disturb it, and I have had a lot of trouble to teach her this trick."

"What a child it is!" he murmured, as he obeyed her commands. "I believe you will always be the same innocent prattler that toddled about after me from room to room till I consented to have a game of romps with you," this as he kissed the rosebud lips tenderly, and stroked the silky little head caressingly.

"I sometimes almost wish, dear father, that I was back again in my short frocks and grimy pinatas and sticky fingers, challenging you to play our old games," she said, with a wistful tenderness in her voice.

"Why, queenie?" he asked, anxiously.

"Because I could always be with you then, and you seemed all mine; besides, Lord Idmiston didn't come bothering me with his stupid jealousy."

"Is that all that worries you?" he said, dreamily.

"All!" she exclaimed, opening wide her large, brown eyes. "What could be more provoking than to have a dear old pet of a papa who absents himself away from breakfast till dinner-time, always pleading excuses, business, &c., &c. Now I say it is time you rested; we are ever so rich, and don't want to become Rothschilds. You have only our queenie to live for, and why go heaping up gold upon gold? I shall only get more extravagant than I am already. Come promise me you will give up the nasty old City."

Every word she said pierced him to the heart, but he turned the subject, and said carelessly,—

"An idle life would not suit me, Valence;

but breakfast is ready, and Idmiston is coming to ride with you this morning."

"I wish he would stay away then," she said, laughing merrily, "unless he is better tempered than he was at Lady Templeton's ball."

"I expect you teased him, queenie," he returned. "You mustn't forget that you are rather wilful, and the men you meet in society are not like your doting old father. I fear I have spoilt you sadly; yet I have tried to do my duty by you."

"Now if you talk like that I shall give you coffee without cream, toast minus butter," she exclaimed, throwing her beautiful arms round his neck, and bending his fine classic head down and stopping further speech with her dimpled fingers.

"Do as you will," he said, fondly, as they entered the breakfast room arm-in-arm, more like brother and sister than father and daughter.

Breakfast discussed, Mr. Eldon prepared to leave for the City, and Valence's face looked somewhat sad as she heard the order for the carriage.

"I was hoping you would have indulged me to-day, papa," she pointed. "I have seen such a duck of a bracelet, pearls and rubies, that I wanted you to buy. Lady Blanche has a beautiful one, pearls and emeralds, and I am determined she shall not out me out, little vain thing."

"I am very sorry, dear queenie, to refuse you, but I really must be off at once," anxiously looking at his watch.

"But what about the bracelet, papa?" she said. "It is not likely I can permit Blanche to outvie me!"

A sigh escaped him as he replied, absently,—

"Do as you will, child; have it if you are bent upon it."

"But the pleasure won't be half so much, papa dear, if you can't come with me," she pleaded like a spoilt child as she was.

"I shall be sure to like it if you have set your

hat upon it," he returned, hurriedly, kissing her, and fairly running down the broad staircase as he heard the carriage approaching.

"Will this never end?" he murmured bitterly, as he entered the handsome vehicle. Oh! that I had the courage to tell her the truth! My poor darling! Would to Heaven, dear wife, you were with me now to guide and advise me. I have only tried to carry out your last wishes—treasured words that have lain on my heart never to be effaced among its beats. 'Keep the wind and storms of life from our darling, husband mine, as you love me.' If I have erred it has been through over zealousness and affection. Angel wife, lead me right by thy sweet, pure spirit, that winged its way all too soon from earth."

A bright radiant sunbeam cast a golden ray into the window, as if to answer the stricken husband and father's petition; and the ever-busy Stock Exchange was reached, and the millionaire stepped out and ascended the broad flight of steps, where several men stood in groups conversing drolly.

Many were the admiring eyes that followed Valence as she rode by the side of Lord Idminster in the Park that morning, proud and impulsive as an empress, her eyes flashing, her delicate face all aglow, her mouth quivering with healthful excitement.

"By Jove, she's a very queen of beauty. What a bewitching Idminster is!" sighed young Lieutenant Merville, of the Guards, to another military friend.

"Yes—she's a regular high-spirited girl, but—er—somewhat too *Antoinette* for my taste," drawled his friend.

"Come, don't talk so absurd, dear boy, because the beautiful Valence refused you that waltz the other night. Confess the truth that the grapes are rather sour, like a man. You are not the only one she has snubbed. Why, she cut your humble servant clean dead after I had found her carriage one foggy night at the opera, and saved her from getting cold. Next time I saw her she stared at me haughtily, and deliberately passed me."

"All I can say, dear boy, is, that she might eaton a thousand odds for me, I required the dashing guardaman twirling his fair monsieur affectingly. I never goin for your old beauties, you know. Ah! there goes pretty Lady Blanche," this, as he rose his hat inconsequently to a fair girl, who dashed by on a fine chestnut mare. "That's more my style."

"I play your taste, then," thought Merville. "She's too babyish for me. I like dash and spirit; but, there, it's no use a poor cub talking of heiresses and beauties." He looked wistfully in the direction of Valence and sighed. "I suppose the matron will choose some ancient spinster, whose face will be as yellow as her title-deeds, and I shall be sold. That's the result of being poor, but uncommonly handsome." His soliloquy was interrupted by his friend, who linked his arm, and off they walked, nodding, bowing and smiling to the fair dames they recognised in the fashionable crowd.

"Just another turn," pleaded Lord Idminster to Valence. "I wish to show you a bed of the finest tulips I have seen in England."

"Very well, but mind, I shall expect to see a very rare kind from your glowing description," she said, smiling bewitchingly.

"Perhaps I may have praised them too highly, but you will pardon me should they not meet your approval. To have you by my side is such exquisite happiness to me that every tree and flower appears beautiful; earth is brighter; all nature seems changed!"

A swift blush passed over her face as she said, archly,—

"Then it was not the tulips after all that you wished me to turn back for, but nature in general. Now what do you think of that old stump standing as if mourning for its departed glories. Is that beautiful?"

"Yes, sweet inquisitor, because, though aged, it stands erect and firm; a giant among weaker saplings, a guide and landmark to wayfarers to shelter in a storm, and shade

from the hot sun's rays in the sultry weather!"

"You carry too many gams for me, my lord," she returned. "But you are right, I know."

"Why will you persist in calling me by that odious appellation? If you knew how it pained me, I know you would not," he said, earnestly.

"I do not wish to give you pain, so I'll say, just to please you, *Antoinette*," she replied, shyly.

"How *Jove* happy!" he said, delightedly.

"But don't be too satisfied. I did not promise to call you always *Antoinette*, mind."

"Satisfied after five days &c., sweet Valence. I live in the present, like the flies, and must be grateful for small mercies; the future must take care of itself."

They made a handsome pair as they dashed along, chattering gaily; she so fair, with a peacock-feather on her sweet face, his dark, passionate eyes looking with love and admiration at his impulsive but beautiful companion.

It was past seven before Mr. Eldon returned home that evening, looking wan and jaded.

"See, papa, here is the bracelet; is it not a beauty?" holding out her round polished arm gleaming with the costly gem, that glittered like fire. Noting for the first time his pale face, she added,—

"How thoughtful I am! You are tired, then! I will order dinner at once."

"I am all right, child," he said, absentedly. "Ah! you were showing me your bracelet. It is very pretty."

"But don't think me too extravagant, papa, will you? It is five hundred pounds. I don't think it too much, though."

"It is very nice, no doubt, but why is Idminster not here? Did you ride with him this morning?"

"Yes. He will perhaps look in after dinner."

"Poor papa! How I wish your dear face would look bright and merry! I cannot imagine why it is so pale and jaded, so different to what it used to be," sighed Valence, as she sat reclining herself in the palatial drawing-room, where exotics and costly furniture and works of art abounded in lavish profusion. "How generous you are to your queenie! I ought to be the happiest girl in the world," looking at the glistening bauble on her arm, "with such a father!" and here a rosy blush suffused her face. "Adoring lover as *Trovianion* is—yes, I can say it in secret—he little knows how much I care for him. Dear, noble heart, he must not even guess how dear he is to me, because then he would press his suit; and much as I care for him, I would not leave dear papa now that he seems so poorly."

"In sweet maiden meditations, Valence?" said Lord Idminster, entering quietly. "Come, sweetheart, a penny for your thoughts," kissing the taper fingers with the grace of a courtier of the olden times.

"Thoughtful!" she answered, confusedly. "They were very foolish ones. But how did you know I was here, sir?"

"Your papa told me where I should find the household fairy. Am I not welcome?"

"Oh yes, very. We will have some music, and cheer papa up. He is passionately fond of listening to our duets. But first sing something to me."

Lord Idminster had a peculiarly sweet tenor voice, one that would have made his fortune had he been born out of the purple.

"My Queen" was the song he chose, and Valence sat perfectly entranced, for she knew that this man's heart was wholly hers, and that every word was meant for her, the outpourings of his very soul.

A strange thrill passed over her frame when the singer had finished, an indefinite presentiment of she knew not what as she thought,—

"I have won the love of a man whose nature is so far above me that I almost fear him. I am silly and vain. He is all that is

great and good; the very depth of his nature frightens me sometimes. It is that of the Moor, unfathomable, deep, and invulnerable."

She little thought, simple guileless girl that she was, that hers was a nature as full of depth and passion as her lordly lover; a kind of priceless flower struggling for the summer sun; a beautiful chrysalis just turning to its last but perfect stage.

"Thank you," she said, tremulously. "That is a lovely song!" as Lord Idminster left the instrument and stood before her.

"Yes, it is a grand conception, Valence, and when the writer of it composed the words, he must have been inspired by love; the queen of his soul must have been very near. Could she have been as fair as my queen?" fixing his dark eyes passionately on Valence's face.

"She might have been dark," she replied, smiling mischievously.

"But none the less fair to him," he retorted quickly. "See, I keep my weapon sharpened against so powerful an adversary."

But all at once a dark angry gleam glittered in his eyes as he noted for the first time the bracelet she wore.

"A priceless gift, eh, from some happy count?" he added, coldly.

"Do you admire it, my lord?" this defiantly, feeling annoyed at his change of tone.

"I am not sure that I do," freezing. "I am no judge of such trifles."

"It cost a lot of money," she said, bent on teasing him, a fault she cultured to perfection and glorified to exercise when once her lover's jealousy was aroused.

"That could have been better expended, doubtless," he returned, angrily.

Hearing her father's footsteps approaching, and thinking she had teased him sufficiently, she said quickly,—

"Could papa expend his money, then, on something more worthy than his only child."

"My darling, forgive me!" he murmured, contritely. "I am deeply sorry. Say I am pardoned!"

"I will give you a sound lecture, sir, next time you transgress!"

"I err through love that is so deep that to even know other men come near you, breathe the same air, hear you speak, and look into your eyes, maddens me, and shall I tell you why?" and he trembled with the overwhelming feeling that possessed him.

"Yes," she faltered, nervously.

"Because, Valence, you never will accept me as your affianced husband, but turn a deaf ear to my prayers, with the one cruel stab, 'I cannot plight myself yet; I am too young and thoughtless.' Oh, Heaven! if you only knew what torture you doom me to live you would pity me!"

"See, calm yourself, here is papa," she said, bewildered and frightened.

"Here you are, young people. Suppose you give us some coffee, queenie," said her father, "and a little music."

Valence obeyed, but, somehow, she felt anything but cheerful, and the words of "My Queen" seemed to haunt her, as did Lord Idminster's passionate outburst; but for her father's sake she rallied, and assumed her old merry ways, and the evening passed over happily, except that she dared not meet her lover's pleading eyes. She was very glad when the time came for his departure.

"Have you sent out the car for your bed, Valence?" asked her father a few days after that memorable evening.

"Yes, papa, most of them, the others will be despatched by to-night."

"That is right. Mind, I wish this to be a brilliant affair, it being your first ball. Let me see, you are nearly nineteen," looking admiringly at her queenly figure, "and resemble your dear mother more and more every day. See, child, for yourself!" opening a plain gold locket he wore on his chain.

"How lovely she was!" she whispered reverently, as she gazed yearningly at the beautiful face. "I can never be half so lovely as she. What would I not give to have father

arms around me"—and large tears welled into her eyes,—“and feel her warm kisses. How desolate, dear father, you must have been when Heaven took her away; dear, sweet angel mother.”

“Desolate child!” he said, brokenly; “my heart is unhappy, and an’ I seem to have misplaced it. No woman’s smile or beauty has ever stirred its earthly chords again. My heart died and was buried with my darling wife, but one gleam of hope has helped me to live, and that was you, our child. You will never know how I have watched you with a miser’s gloating anxiety and care, so that you should grow up not only like your mother in form and feature, but that her gentle nature should live again in you. Grant, merciful Heaven, that I have not striven in vain.”

“You have been much too good to your wilful child, and I have never been worthy of you,” she exclaimed, bursting into tears. “I am selfish, wilful. Oh, papa, why am I so imperfect? How can I return all the sacrifices you have made for me?”

“By trying to follow in the footsteps of her whose memory we both love—not that I could wish to see you anything but my wilful little playmate, whose very faults have been virtues in my eyes. But now, off the ball. I want you to surpass yourself, as this is really your entrance into life that I am fast leaving.”

“What do you mean?” she exclaimed, with frightened eyes.

“Simply that life is nearly over. I mean it’s gaeties, child, for a man when he is on the verge of half a century.”

“I cannot see it in that light at all. I meet many men who are neither so young in years or looks enjoying its pleasures.”

“Perhaps their lives have not been married,” he said, quietly.

“I forgot,” she faltered, sorrowfully.

“I have but one desire,” he continued; “and that is to see you happily settled.”

“Surely, papa, you haven’t turned match-maker? I don’t want to be settled. I mean to live with you all my life, and that is what I call being properly settled,” this demurely.

“I cannot always be with you, child; the elder ones are sometimes gathered by the great Reaper.”

“That is the very reason why I should never leave you,” she replied, firmly, “till—,” but she could not finish the sad sentence. The very thought of losing this darling parent, who had been father, mother, brother, sister and playfellow in one, blanched her cheek, and thrilled her whole being with bitter pain.

Valence Eldon’s nature was all pure, womanly, full of love’s purest emotions, capable of making any sacrifice where her affection was truly touched. A life of martyrdom she would have embraced to save a dear one from misery.

But the world never knew or guessed that the haughty, brilliant young heiress had such a thing as a heart; it gave her credit for being heartless, frivolous and proud.

How can the glittering superficial world of fashion gauge the nature of an impulsive wayward child of fortune? As well try to find out the treasures of the vasty deep.

“You need not look so alarmed,” he said, reassuringly. “Because a person makes his will it is not calculated to shorten his life. Quite the reverse, in my opinion, as it eases his mind from anxiety and care. Now your future is very much like a will it begins to worry me; I wish to see you mistress of your husband’s home and heart. Lord Idmiston loves you truly, that I feel assured. Why not accept him, and make him happy, and your father too?”

A burning blush suffused her face, even to the tips of her ears, as she replied with sweet confusion,—

“I did not think you knew he loved me, papa, or that you wished me to marry him.”

“Somehow I fancy that you have thought about it yourself by the blushes on your face, queenie, eh?” playfully. “Well, now, it is not quite the thing to say, but if your ball passes

off without your acceptance of his hand I should not be pleased. He is a man that I cannot permit to be played with; he is wealthy, and of irreproachable antecedents.”

“I admit all you say, papa, but he is dreadfully jealous, and, besides, I want to have my freedom a little longer. He loves me, and waiting will tone down my faults, perhaps, and his excitable nature.”

“Waiting may tire his patience, Valence, you may lose him altogether. Remember such a prize is worth winning, and many fair girls would think so too. Don’t play with a man’s affections, that is my advice. I love you, but I should almost dislike you if I thought you could play with hearts, dear as you are to me.”

“I will try to do what is right, papa, indeed I will; but oh! I don’t like the thought of leaving you,” she said, sadly.

“I have done it—yes, I was brave,” Mr. Eldon murmured, when he gained the library.

“She will accept him—my darling will be safe from the storms of a bitter world. If she only knew how her words cut me to the quick, and how I nearly relented when the tears came into her pretty eyes. She will never know what I suffered when I pleaded for her to reign in another man’s home. Now for figures; let me see, twenty thousand pounds if I die tonight; next week it will be a useless piece of paper unless I can raise the premium. It must be got somehow, or my child will be a beggar! Where am I to turn? All is hollow mockery,” as he gazed at the magnificent apartment. “All mortgaged—all gone through my own miserable folly. Why has fate been so hard upon me? I only wanted to heap up riches for her sake. Is it a judgment for making her an idol? oh! I am fitly punished, but have mercy on thy erring servant.”

And he bowed his head in his hands and wept as he had never done for eighteen years.

CHAPTER II.

The house in Park-lane was a blaze of light, carriages dashed up to the crimson-carpeted pavement; fair women, brave in their finery, passed up the wide staircase between admiring comments from the crowd of idlers that always congregate wherever they see the tell-tale awning up.

Flowers, perfumes, silvery laughter, jewels flashing, vising with the sparkling eyes of England’s fairest flowers, lights, music, all made up a ravishing sight.

But fairest among them all was the young hostess in her snowy satin robes and costly lace that fell in billowy clouds around her supple form. Diamonds dashed on her shoulders, neck and arms; a very queen of the revels was she as she floated here and there, dispensing radiant smiles among her guests, leaving a subtle perfume from her robes.

As she passed, Lord Idmiston stooped and picked up a spray of a lily-of-the-valley that fell from her bouquet, pressing it to his lips passionately.

He thought himself unobserved, but Mr. Eldon was standing, shaded from view by a curtain, and murmured,—

“How he loves my beautiful child. May he succeed in winning her to-night?”

Let me look at your programme one moment, dearest,” pleaded Lord Idmiston.

“What for?” she asked, coquettishly. “I cannot spare you more than two dances; it is filled up.”

“So I should think,” he said, trembling with suppressed rage, “when I see the Duke of Mornington has put his name down for three waltzes.”

“What matters? You do not care for round dances!” she said, resentfully; “he does. There’s no accounting for taste.”

“You are right, Valence,” he returned, reproachfully; “or a lady would not permit a man, though he’s a duke, to monopolize three waltzes in one evening. Will you give up two of these under the plea of fatigue, just to honour me,” looking into the lovely face with a woul-

dous passion, which she unhappily did not notice, as her eyes were cast down on her bosom.

“Why should I?” she asked, demurely. “I love this waltz; the Greens claim it as their especial dance. Surely you would not wish to mar the enjoyment of my evening?”

“Will it be so intensely enjoyable to waltz with the duke?” this sarcastically.

“Yes!” she replied, in a spirit of defiance; “and here he comes.” The band has commenced the young duke passed his arm around her slender waist, and in another moment Lord Idmiston saw her floating round the room, the duke’s breath fanning her cheek, her face brilliant with smiles, her eyes sparkling at the words breathed rather than spoken by her partner.

The sight maddened him, and he felt hot and feverish. A desire seized him to tear her from the duke’s embrace, and hurl him at his feet.

“I’ll get into the air!” he muttered. “I am hot and feverish. This night shall decide my fate; she shall either be mine, or I will never set eyes on her face again. I will not be played with any longer; I should go mad, and do something foolish. You are too dangerously sweet, my beautiful Valence, for a man to see you unmoved in another’s arms. No! I would rather see you lying—oh, rash fool!—what was I about to say?”

He had gained the balcony and the calm, but pure evening air and stillness soothed him considerably. Taking a seat behind a tall palm, he gave himself up to sweet dreams that were rudely dispelled in an instant, in a way he little guessed.

“It is cool and refreshing here, Miss Eldon,” said the duke, softly, as he led Valence right past his lordship. “I shall never forget that walk. You are a fairy, a goddess. Were I a poet I would make you my muse.”

“You flatter me!”

“That were impossible,” he replied, gallantly. “Could you tell the ruling planets they were brilliant, would it be flattery?”

“I am not a planet, though, your grace,” she said, laughing merrily.

“There I must beg to differ. You are the particular star that all lesser stars revolve around, borrowing lustre and brightness from its glory.”

“You talk in enigmas,” she said, evasively; “and I hear the music has commenced now; we will join the dancers.”

“Will you grant me one favour before we return?”

“I cannot say,” she stammered, feeling how rash it was to be out here alone with the duke, whom she knew admired her, and paling with the thought of what Trevanion would say if he could see her.

“To give me that rose.”

“It would fade; besides, I could not spare it,” she said, confusedly.

“It would never fade if you gave it me,” he replied earnestly. “Love would preserve it. Don’t turn from me. You would not if you knew the pain you inflict.”

“Stop!” she said, firmly. “I cannot listen to you, indeed, I dare not. Here is the rose, but leave me; it is all I can give you.”

In another moment she had gone, leaving the duke a prey to conflicting emotion.

“Surely she is not engaged,” he murmured; “such news as that flies. By Jove, I would dare much to win her. Only the brave deserve the fair; I will not give in yet.”

“Curse him!” groaned Lord Idmiston; “she is as false as fair. Thank Heaven, it is not too late to throw off this glamour. I could have died a thousand deaths rather than witness her perfidy—the rose from her bosom given by her own free will. May you never know how you made me suffer to-night, but I am free. Yes, I am no longer a dupe; you shall wear the coronet; I will leave the field clear, he shall at least have no rival.”

“Where is Trevanion, Valence?” asked Mr. Eldon, when supper was announced.

“I don’t know, papa. I have not seen him since the last quadrille we danced together.”

An anxious look came into her face, as time passed on with no sign of her lover, but her duties as hostess had to be gone through somehow.

But it was a pitiful little face, that looked into her father's, when he kissed her that night, or rather morning, on retiring.

"Did you two quarrel, Valence?" he asked wearily; "it is very strange his going off, like that!"

"We did not quarrel, but he was rather annoyed because the duke put his name down for three waiters," she said, shivering visibly with the keen morning air.

"You are cold, my pet; get to bed," he said, soothingly; "a little fit of jealousy that will right itself with the morning's reflections. He is so very earnest, and loves you with a deep, overmastering passion."

"He is very cruel, and deserves to be well punished, papa. Love should have perfect confidence."

"I wish he was less exacting," murmured her father when she had gone. "I would give ten years of my life to see her his wife. I was in hopes that all would be settled to-night. In that case my task would have been easy; I could have borrowed the premium from him. Everything seems against me; the more I strive the farther I seem to be off. Well, I must summon up courage and ask him tomorrow. He is sure to come penitent, and I can make some excuse—money all out in the stocks just a slight pressure for a time. Anything is justifiable to save my child from a beggar's fate."

The dawn was fast penetrating through the rooms where a short hour back little, satin-shod feet had kept time with the music; many a withered flower and satin ribbon lay strewn on the polished floor where all was life; now silence reigned supreme, and these bits of lace and flowers were like ghosts of departed joys.

Poor Valence laid her sunny head on her pillow, feeling that night more weary than she had ever remembered before, not with fatigue, but with bitter disappointment. The sun was peeping in with all its Eastern silver glory before sleep woced her eyelids.

Poor child! She little knew that sorrow was to strew her path so cruelly; hers had been a life where roses had bloomed. Neither care or anxiety had ruffled that snowy brow. Was there no protecting angel to guard her from evil? Who would pity her sweet maiden innocence as she lay, her dewy lips parted, her little hands crossed on her bosom, as she fell asleep, petitioning the Creator to bless and keep Trevanion in His holy keeping.

Sorrow is the portion of all humanity, and Valence was ordained to suffer in the crucible of fate, doubtless, perhaps, to expel the dross and refine the pure gold of her nature.

CHAPTER III.

"Should Idminster come this morning, queenie, mind, and don't be too hard upon him. He has a high spirit, and a word spoken in haste sometimes does a world of mischief."

"But he deserves to be scolded for leaving me without a word, papa. Surely you do not wish me to submit to rudeness?" she replied, rather warmly.

"Certainly not, my love; I only wish you to do what you think best. Lovers will fall out, you know; but I must go, it is late."

"Why don't you stay? Just one day wouldn't make such a difference, and then you would see how patient I could be with Trevanion if he asked for forgiveness."

"I cannot; indeed, I must go. You see, dear, things would stop altogether if I was not in the City."

"Always the same," she sighed, as he ran quickly out of the room. "You are wearing yourself out, poor papa. You are strangely altered of late. I wish you would confide in me. I feel convinced there is something on your mind."

It was useless Fluffy purring and rubbing its

little cold nose against its mistress's satin shod feet.

Valence sat on in deep thought, deaf to her pet's coaxing little arts. Finding she was indifferent to everything Fluffy in high dudgeon, went and ensconced itself on a delicate piece of crewelwork that lay on a couch as if in a spirit of revenge.

"Was ever anything so tiresome," she murmured. "Here's that talking doll, Blanche. I wish I had gone out, she will bore me dreadfully. Heigho, it's too late for regrets, for here she is."

"So delighted to find you in," gushed her little ladyship, "Why, how well you bear dissipation; really I believe it suits you, dear Miss Eldon," standing on tip-toe to kiss Valence effusively.

"My dissipation is not continual, you know, Lady Blanche; perhaps that is why I do not show it."

"Ah, of course, I forgot you do not mix very much in society. You are a kind of violet hiding your head from the busy world of fashion; who knows, perhaps, you are right?" she rattled on, as she disposed of her dainty, cambric-clad little person and gold crutch-handled cane on a settee, evidently determined to stay, and have a nice little chat, as she termed it.

"What an insufferable chatterbox she is," thought Valence. "What if Trevanion comes while she is here, she would be spiteful enough to remain just out of mischief!"

"That was a sweet, pretty dress you wore last night; you quite surpassed us all; but, there, when you quiet girls do emerge from your shell you dazzle by your splendour. I am sure Worth was the creator of the dear, telling thing. Confess I am right," this persuasively, having made up her mind to order one from the great master-milliner of the same kind in pale blue.

"I did not get it from Worth's; it was made from an idea of my own," replied Valence.

"Why, you are a real genius. What a pity you were not brought up—I mean born—in different circumstances," checking herself as she noted the proud flush of indignation mount her friend's temple. "No offence, dearest. I frequently meet with people who were intended by nature's gifts for useful lives. Now, there's my dear friend, the Countess of Grantford, with a voice that would make a fortune perfectly thrown away."

"I do not see it in that light, Lady Blanche," she returned, coldly. "Gifts are given to us by Heaven; therefore, if properly used, they must be blessings, and should be cultivated, no matter what position of life we are placed in."

"You are a little wiseacre. I should never be surprised to hear of your preaching at some of these ranting meetings they get up about the enfranchisement of women, and women's rights. You would make a capital lecturer."

"Because I happen to have the taste to devise my own ball dress instead of permitting a dressmaker!" she remarked, sarcastically. "I was not aware that ladies who go in for platform oratory were given to such vanities as ball dresses."

"Ah, perhaps not, dear. I was giving you credit for too much solidity, forgetting that you are as vain and silly as the rest of us," laughing at her own conceits.

"Spiteful, envious little peacock," thought Valence. "Your tongue is as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"You developed a new trait last night, ma belle," continued Lady Blanche.

"Indeed. What might that be?" asked Valence.

"Why, you flirted dreadfully with the duke; he seemed quite smitten, too, and danced three times with you. Wasn't that flirting with a vengeance, eh?"

"I cannot say; I only know my actions must have been pretty well canvassed last night."

"That is the penalty of being great, but I

forgot to tell you the latest news; I am so stupid. Lord Idminster has taken it into his head to leave England; is going cruising about in his new yacht. Was never so surprised in my life when Bertie told us this morning."

A cold shiver ran through Valence's frame, and her face paled to the lips as she sat like one turned to stone for a few brief moments, while her tormentor gazed with a gratified smile to think she had wounded her antagonist at last.

"That shaft went home," she thought, exultingly. "He has given her up; my revenge is complete. He scorned my affections for her. What happiness has she brought him?"

No pity or womanly feeling entered the proud little beauty's heart. When did it ever to a fallen rival? On the contrary, she was delighted to be the bearer of such direful tidings.

"You are not well, dear; fatigue from last night's dancing; all your colour has gone. Why, you danced with him last, I do believe; of course you did, now I remember, because your papa came up and asked Bertie if he had seen him a few minutes after, and he was nowhere to be seen; some sudden freak, I suppose; but time is on the wing, and a little rest would do you a world of good; dissipation tells even upon you."

"Yes," gasped poor Valence; "I don't feel quite so fresh as usual; I shall be better in a few minutes; this room, too, is warm. I think you said Lord Idminster was about to start for a cruise?"

"I mean to say he has already gone," she replied, rather tartly.

"Gone!" faltered poor Valence. "How do you mean? Surely he couldn't go without bidding his friends good-bye; your mamma, for instance, who is one of his oldest friends."

"I do mean it. He intends joining his yacht at Malta, and started for Southampton an hour ago, but I must run away; I have had quite a delightful chat, dear. Will you be at Lady Templeton's this afternoon?"

"No, I don't think so," returned Valence, abstractedly rising, and permitting the false little creature to give her the usual Judas kiss, as is the custom among young ladies, and old ones too, to their shame, when it is a mockery. "What have I done," moaned Valence, when her tormentor had gone; "how could you have treated me in so cruel a fashion. Surely some explanation was due after your words of love? Oh, Trevanion, my darling! come back, I am indeed punished for my folly."

But no answer came to the weary heart, nothing but the steady tick, tick, of the time-piece on the mantelshelf, till her eyes began to burn with bitter tears, that fell hot and scalding on her hands.

Poor motherless girl, she was beginning to learn the stern realities of life, that it is not a path of roses, however favoured mortals may be for a time. Trouble even entered the garden of Eden, and now her paradise was invaded.

"I do not believe her; she said it out of spite," dashing away the tears. "He loves me, I know it; every action told me that, and I—yes, I love him with all my heart, with all my soul. I will telegraph to his club, I will—but, no, I dare not, he would think it unmaidenly of me. Oh, papa, papa! come to your child, I am in trouble," and she threw herself on the rug, her favourite haven from a child when in grief, and sobbed, till fatigued and want of her usual rest closed the tear-laden eyes in slumber, sweet, calm, and peaceful.

"How lovely she is," thought the Duke of Mornington, who had been ushered in by the butler, perfectly unconscious of the fact that his mistress was in the room lying fair and beautiful as a picture, her golden hair unfastened, her arms bared, revealing their exquisite shape and whiteness, her tiny feet peeping from her lace robes, ravishingly tempting to the man who stood looking with intense admiration, with a mad longing to snatched one kiss from the rosebud lips, and

gather this fair flower to his heart, and, by his love, charm away the pearly tears that still lay wet on her face.

As he stood drinking in the sweet picture, her lips murmured quite audibly,—

"Trevanion, come back, I—" the rest of the sentence he could not catch, but a dark frown came into his usually good-humoured face, as he muttered,—

"Am I too late? Is she thinking of Idmiston? Is it he that has brought the tears into her eyes? Bab, I'm a simpleton; she has never been singed yet; no, she is heart-whole. I feel sure such a thing would have been talked of; besides, he has gone off only a few hours ago to the Pyramids or the somethings; that doesn't look like an engagement."

How long he would have feasted his eyes, or she have lain dreaming strange fitful things there is no knowing, had not the butler entered hurriedly to say he had inquired everywhere for Miss Eldon, but could not find her.

The noise awoke her, and in a moment she was up, her face burning with blushes as her eyes met those of the duke.

"I ought to apologise," he said, gently, "for intruding upon you, but, indeed, I was not aware you were here. Will you forgive me for staying a few brief minutes? You would if you knew how precious they were to me. You looked like a fair spirit, and when I turned to go your magical beauty held me spellbound. I could not leave the spot, I was enthralled, enslaved; nay, do not look chidingly at me," this passionately, as he tried to imprison her hand, "it is rather your dangerous loveliness that you should scold. I am but mortal, and have surrendered every sense I possess in one absorbing deep admiration and love at so fair a shrine."

"Oh, spare me," she said, brokenly. "I am not well, and I cannot listen to your words. Oh, forgive me; I know I am to blame, I have been thoughtless, but, indeed, I did not think you cared for me."

"Care for you! Why I never knew how dear you were till this moment, when I stand before you trembling with fear lest the sweetest hopes of my future may be crushed out of my life by one word from your lips," he said, hoarsely, trembling with intense emotion.

Pity made her hesitate before she uttered the words that would send a cruel stab to the man who had conferred not only one of the greatest honours that lay in his power by offering her a coronet, but with it had given her his whole heart—a precious gift that had been sued for in vain by hosts of reigning beauties, not only of England but other climes, where dark eyes had languished for the fair Saxon aristocrat to no purpose.

"I am deeply grieved to give you pain," she faltered, "but I dare not bid you hope. I can only say that I esteem you very much, but that is all."

"I see it all; you love another, and I am too late," he replied, sadly. "Well, may you be happy. Heaven knows I would have made you an adoring husband had fate been kinder!"

"You will forgive me for my thoughtlessness," she pleaded, tremulously. "I have been very foolish, thinking of my own pleasures, forgetting that I might bring pain by my very heedlessness. I fear poor papa has indulged me very much."

"Forgive you!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "I am the one to blame not to have guessed the truth. You are young and full of innocent impulses, wild and free as a rose. I was rash to hazard all on the cast of a die. Will you answer me one question? Had your affections not been engaged would there have been hope for me? I know I have no right to ask you, but it would compensate me to know what might have been when I shall only have a sweet memory to dwell upon."

"Yes," she whispered, ever so softly, as she placed her hand in his. "I may say that; I esteem you very much, and had I a brother I would wish him to be like you."

"I cannot tell you what comfort your words

have given me—words that will be treasured up when you will have forgotten me and them."

With one long, lingering kiss on the little trembling hand he held, the Duke was gone and Valence was alone, a prey to conflicting doubts, and sad, bitter reflections.

"What was I born for?" she said, rocking herself despairingly. "I seem to bring neither happiness to myself nor others. Even papa shuns my society now, and Trevanion has gone and left me without a word, and the Duke is miserable all through my flippant conduct. Blanche was right, after all, I am a flirt—a creature to be shunned. Heaven help me! I never knew myself before now that it's too late."

"Come, come, lady bird, what ails you? Has papa refused you some pretty gew-gaw?" said a kind, motherly voice, as the girl was folded to the loving arms of her old nurse, Mary Clark.

"I am unhappy, nurse," she sobbed, "because I know how selfish and wicked I have been all my life."

"You selfish! Why, my poppet, you are the dearest, sweetest child in the world!" replied Mrs. Clark, warmly. "It is a good thing you said those words, for had anyone else said so of you, even had it been your own papa, they would have had the strength and length of my tongue. You are tired and feverish, all the result of staying up last night; those balls and grand sets-out don't agree with you—no, you want a change and must have it. I shall speak out whether I get scolded or not when the master comes home; you want sea air and quiet."

"Dear, kind old nursery!" she said, kissing the loyal, gentle face affectionately. "It is not change I am in need of, it is love that is breaking my heart. Yes, it is too true; come, sit down here like you used to when I came with my childish griefs, and listen patiently." Placing the old lady down tenderly on her own chair and taking her place at her feet, holding the wrinkled hand in hers, as she poured out her sad tale of love and sorrow.

"What do you think, nursery, now?"

"That he is not worthy of such a prize," Mary Clark replied, with a grunt. "How dare he go off out of the house like a thief in the night, I should like to know?"

"Because he thought me unworthy his love. Can't you see my conduct was light and wicked?"

"Stuff and nonsense," snapped the dame; "you are young, and innocent of the slightest fault. He was a pig-headed madman, and deserves to lose my sweet child."

"But can't you see that it was wrong to disobey his entreaty when he begged me not to dance but one waltz with the duke? If he had not loved me he would not have looked so pained."

"Serve him right," said the old lady, stoutly, "he might have known he couldn't put old heads on young shoulders. It's no use you thinking, ladybird, that I am going to take sides with him, because I shan't. He is not half worthy of you, nor anyone else as I've seen," looking with a wealth of love into the fair young face that had lain on her bosom for nineteen years, and had never been chid in her brief life by the affectionate creature.

"Always the loving, spoiling old nursery. No wonder I'm so wicked," she said, sadly. "Have you ever heard what Burns said?"

"Who's he, child?"

"The Scottish poet," she returned.

"What have I to do with poets, ladybird?" she said, indifferently; "something disagreeable I be bound, if he's like that gentleman, Mr. Shakespeare."

Even poor Valence in all her misery could not help smiling at Mrs. Clark's simplicity.

"Shakespeare, nursery. Why he was one of the greatest bards the world has ever known, so profound, and yet a child would understand him."

"Heaven forbid that," she replied, hotly.

"Why, such dreadful blood-curdling things as

I saw in the play of Hamlet, which is one of his, they say, I never did see and never wish to see again. I only hope, my child, you will never see it. Why there was nothing but dead bodies popping about, like so many dummies, one down, 'nother come up style; and when the sweet young lady they called Ophelia became mad through that miserable fellow, Hamlet, I felt all my temper rising, and had he been near me I know I should have struck him with my umbrella, the strutting, mad-brained fellow."

"You do not admire my favourite author, then, nursery?"

"Heaven forbid that I should encourage such bloodthirsty stuff," she said, in awe. "No I never forgot that sweet girl twining wreaths of wild flowers around her pretty head, and the nasty straws that stuck out spoiling it all and her song before they found her. Drat the man Hamlet, I wish he was here now, I'd—"

"What would you do, dear?" soothingly.

"Oh! something very foolish, no doubt, but I'm only a simple old woman who believes in what she sees, and hates to see the strong oppress the weak."

"You are all that is good and true," Valence said, tenderly; "and although there are many things that you don't quite understand, yet you grasp their truth and meaning, and perhaps are wiser than we. But I was telling you what the poet Burns said, who is quite another character to your *bête noir*, Shakespeare. The words ran thus, and they apply so pointedly to everyone almost, and myself in particular.

"Oh! that the gods the gift would give us, To see ourselves as others see us."

There, don't you think they are very true?"

"Yes, in many cases they may be, but I can't see as they apply to you, poor darling; but as I'm alive here's the master. See," drawing Valence to the window, "why, he has actually come home in a cab, a thing I never knew him to do but once in my life, when you were taken ill with the fever."

"I am so glad," said Valence, wistfully, as she ran down the stairs to meet him; "perhaps he may have heard from Trevanion."

In another few minutes father and daughter were seated together in the library discussing Lord Idmiston's strange conduct.

Mr. Eldon had a haggard look in his face and lines of care encircled his mouth, that gave it a pained expression when his child opened her heart, and told him for the first time in her life, how dear Trevanion was to her now that she had lost him."

"Oh! my child," he moaned, "why did you not tell me this before; I might have averted all this misery. I knew he loved you, but I never thought, much as I wished it, that you reciprocated his affection."

"I never knew it myself till now," she said, brokenly.

"And you refused the duke? Valence, why did you not plead for time? Anything, rather than throw away such a grand offer as that."

"But I did not love him, papa; and you would not wish me to be a traitor to him and my own heart as well."

"Heaven forbid that I should wish you to do aught but what was right! But I am sadly troubled, child, and say things that I don't quite realise, perhaps. Go and let me rest; I may feel better soon."

"I knew it! Yes, dear father, you cannot hide it from me; you are not well. Oh! do let me send for Doctor Vaughan."

"I am all right, child," he said, testily. "I am a little tired, that is all; besides, this affair of yours and Idmiston's annoys me. Run away to your nurse, she will comfort you," kissing the anxious face affectionately. "My last hope goes! Oh, Heaven!" he groaned, "I have supplicated in vain, and my child is a beggar! I have fought and struggled, and the last resource has failed me. How true is it that man proposes and Thou disposes. Thy will be done, not mine, oh, Heaven!"

Twilight stole into the chamber, and still he sat on, sometimes writing, sometimes lost in dreamy fancies that waited him back to early days when his young wife's sweet face brightened his life; and the morning when she confided her cherished little secret of her wife's dignity came before him vividly. Then the scene changed, when she lay like a withered leaf, her babe in her arms that were almost too weak to hold it, her eyes pleading with yearning love to him that their child should be his one constant care.

A choked sob escaped his lips as he contemplated the cold, dreary future that must be her portion now that he was powerless to avert the calamity looming black above her defenceless head.

"I must not let her see how wretched I feel," he sighed, drearily, as he rose at the summons of the first dinner bell. "She shall be kept in happy ignorance as long as I can possibly hide it from her; besides, poor child, she is in deep trouble now, and having probably been the innocent means of bringing it about does not lessen its pain. My only hope is that Idmiston will regret his rash step and return. At least, she will be spared from a panger's fate as his wife."

It was but a poor pretence with both father and daughter to-day they had dined when the ottoman was removed; dainty dishes came and were sent away untouched, and Valence gave quite a little sigh of relief when the dessert made its appearance, because then they were alone, no prying eyes were searching for little talk to recount in the servants' hall.

"Try and eat this peach, papa," she said, coaxingly. "I have peeled it so nicely. You have probably eaten next to nothing," placing it on his costly Sevres plate.

"Thank you, child," he returned, making a show of eating it to please her. "But you have not made a very big dinner yourself. Suppose you drink a glass of wine; it will put a little colour into your cheeks that do not look like my saucy Queenie's."

So they chatted on and rallied each other, both determined to hide the gnawing grief that lay cold—a dead weight on their hearts.

There was no music as usual. Valence sat pretending to work, but a close observer would have seen that she made no progress with the matron's leaves that lay in her lap, the needle passing through the canvas listlessly about every two minutes.

It was the saddest evening Valence had ever spent, and she was glad when the butler made his appearance with the candlesticks.

"Good night, dear papa!" she said, going up and kissing him tenderly.

"Are you going to bed?" he said, dreamily.

"Yes, why it's past ten, and I feel so tired," giving a little yawn.

"Good night, my darling. Heaven bless you!" he said, fervently. "If I have erred towards you, will you forgive me, and believe that what I did was done for the best?"

"You err, dear papa! Why, you are the wisest, best of dads in the world. It is I that should ask for forgiveness for the many naughty little things I have committed to vex you, though you have been too indulgent to own them."

"You little know," he sighed, "that I have been your cruellest enemy, child—a blind fool!"

"I will not listen to you if you say such harsh things," she replied, soothingly. "You could never be anything but my own dear loving father, whatever you did."

"And if you found out that I was poor, miserably so, and through my own rash folly, you would feel the same?" this anxiously.

"It is the whole world condemned you, and you were so poor that we did not know where to find our next meal, I would love you more for your very misfortunes."

"You would?" he exclaimed, with feverish excitement. "Oh! that I had understood my child before it was too late! I never thought, I never dreamt, that you were possessed with so noble a spirit, or things might be different."

"Could I have done something, then, to make you happier?" she asked, simply. "Because it cannot be too late. Tell me what to do, and I will try my best—indeed, I will, only trust me!"

"I will trust you; but I am tired, and need rest. To-morrow I will tell you all, poor motherless girl!" stroking the soft ringlets of hair that lay on her forehead, caressingly. "Good night. Remember to-morrow we commence afresh?"

"I was right, and he had got some trouble pressing on his mind, poor dear; he will be better for sharing it. To-morrow I shall know all. Well, they say troubles never come alone; so it seems, for this has been a day of surprises and unhappiness. He has not gone to bed, after all," as she noticed the library door ajar and the gas burning. "Why don't he go to bed? He requires rest. Shall I call him? No; it might vex him. He has gone to get a book, perhaps, to lull him off to sleep."

The hours of midnight boomed at last through the mansion, where all was silent as the grave, except for the scratch, scratch of Mr. Eldon's pen, as he sat amidst a pile of papers.

"There goes another day of misery," he groaned. "Thank Heaven! Who knows but that the new one may bring peace."

It was to bring peace in a way he little guessed—"the peace that passeth all understanding." When the bright sun rose in the morning, and stole into the room, he still sat on, a radiant smile on his countenance that told he had found that peace he was denied on earth.

In the cold, still hand was his pen, scarcely dry from the ink, and an unfinished letter, asking for a week's grace to pay the premium on his life insurance.

The earthly fitters of life must have snapped in that one supreme effort to save Valence.

CHAPTER IV.

"Not down yet, and breakfast getting cold, Morgan!" Valence said, with surprise. "Go and tell papa breakfast is waiting."

"Yes, miss," returned the butler, as he hastened to do her bidding.

"No letter from Trevanian," she sighed, as she looked over carefully the pile that lay by the side of her father's plate. "He is cruel not to write one line."

"The master is not in his room," said Morgan, with white, frightened face.

"Not in his bedroom?" she gasped.

"No, miss. The bed has never been used."

"You must be mistaken," she said, trembling with a terrible foreboding that seized her, nearly paralysing her whole frame.

"Indeed I am not, miss," he said, looking at her young mistress with alarm.

"Let me go and see for myself; he may be ill," she cried, dashing frantically up the stairs, calling loudly on her father to answer. "Papa—papa! Why do you frighten us like this? Where are you? Queenie is coming."

But no answer to her frantic appeals, and at last she gained the library.

"I have found you; why don't you speak?" she exclaimed, now almost frenzied with alarm, and placed her warm arms around his neck in her old childish way, thinking he was asleep, and to wake him with kisses.

Such piercing, heartrending shrieks penetrated through the house, as the poor girl realized the fatal truth, that brought the whole household up in a few moments, where they found the stricken orphan standing with glittering eyes that had no tears—they would not come. She seemed like one turned to stone.

"My precious, stricken lamb!" moaned her nurse, as she tried to persuade her to leave the room. "He is in Heaven, dearie; come, lay your head here and weep. God will strengthen because He has stricken us."

"My father, my father! To-morrow you told me you would tell me all!" she murmured.

"My own father, my father! Oh! Heaven take me too, for I am alone and desolate."

At last, when the family doctor arrived, he gained his point, and led her from the apartment, but with a grave, anxious face, as he noted the dazed, stony expression that seemed to have settled on the girl's features.

"Tears must come, Mrs. Clark," he said, anxiously, "or I should not like to say what the consequences of the shock may produce."

"What can I do?" said the faithful creature, wringing her hands. "I am quite powerless."

"We will see what a sedative will do," he said. "If she can sleep, and then be told of her loss when she awakes, it may open the floodgates of memory afresh in a softer sense, and the brain may recover the sudden blow, as it were."

"You surely do not mean that she may lose her reason, doctor?" she faltered, sobbing bitterly.

"I can only hope and trust to your extreme care and co-operation," he said, guardedly.

It was a house of mourning that spring day. Stray and tan bastrewed the road, an extreme quiet was imperative for the sufferer. Undertakers shambled in and out noiselessly, and the family solicitor sat in the library where the late master had breathed his last.

A perplexed expression was in the solicitor's face as he perused the numerous papers and documents that lay in bundles before him.

"Confusion worse confounded," he muttered. "Poor girl, I am very sorry for her. From what I can see there won't be enough to pay debts. Speculation is a bad investment—it is in this case, at all events."

Sudden failure of the heart's action produced by mental worry was the doctor's explanation of Mr. Eldon's sudden demise.

"Always knew he would be taken off suddenly," said Doctor Vaughan; "in fact, he was fully aware of it himself. The only thing to save him would have been freedom from all anxiety."

"Which, unfortunately, he never had," replied the legal gentleman, feelingly. "I never saw a man's estate so entangled and encumbered in all my experience."

"I am deeply grieved to hear it," said the physician, earnestly, "for the poor child's sake. She is a sweet girl, and my late old friend loved her dearly. Well, well, life is full of changes."

The funeral was over, and poor Valence, looking a ghost of her old, merry self in her black escape robes, that made her appear taller than ever, and heightened the pallor of her face, that now wore an expression of touching resignation that went straight to one's heart for its pitiful pathos.

In solemn, even tones the lawyer read the will, while Valence sat supported by the worthy doctor on one side, and her nurse on the other.

No word escaped her lips as she heard the fatal truth that the estate was encumbered beyond recall, and that the house and even furniture must be sold to realize sufficient to pay the creditors.

"Poor, dear papa," she said; "how he must have suffered to know all this," when talking to her old friend, Doctor Vaughan, afterwards.

"Had he only come to me I would have lent him the money to pay the premium," he said. "Twenty thousand pounds lost just for a few days."

"I don't mind that, doctor," she said, artlessly.

"But, my child, you cannot imagine the sad reverse that awaits you who have been the idol of your father's heart, and the reputed heiress of immense wealth."

"Yes I do, doctor, but Heaven will open up some career for me. Riches would have no use or pleasure now that poor papa is not with us to share them," she said, sadly.

"But tell me, child, what do you intend to do when you leave here?" he asked, kindly.

"Live with my dear old nurse for a time, and then when I feel stronger seek for a

situation. Perhaps you might speak for me when I feel fit for the sake of 'auld lang syne,'" this with a pathetic little smile.

"Be assured, Miss Eldon, that anything that lies in my power I will do if you will but command me. Can I say more?"

"No. And I am deeply grateful to you for your kindness and sympathy in the time of my trial, and when I feel able to battle with the world I will tell you. Good-bye, doctor," and her voice became a little less steady, as the tears would now well into her bonny eyes, as the time had arrived when this kindly friend and adviser was to leave her; another link with the dear dead past severed.

"Not good-bye, dear child, but *au revoir*," he said, cheerily.

"All gone, and I am alone," she murmured, brokenly, as she gazed at the chair where her father used to sit, and where he died a short week back. "Is it real? Is he dead? Yes," looking down at her sable dress; "this tells me it is only too true."

In a month's time the mansion was divested of all its splendid appointments and art treasures, all sold under the auctioneers' hammer—that tiny ivory mallet that does more in one day to wreck hearts and homes than the largest steam one that ever was forged.

Valence was too proud to even retain the gifts of bijouterie her father had lavished upon her.

"No," she would say, proudly, to the solicitor and Mrs. Clark, in answer to their entreaties for her to retain some of the costly reliques that lay scattered about, "I would not touch one if it were to save me from starving. When my dear father gave them to me he was under the impression he could afford them. Things are changed now. His memory must be kept untarnished—pure as snow. It would break my heart to hear a word against the honour of one of the dearest parents child ever had."

"All quixotic," grumbled the old gentleman. "She's certainly not made of the stuff to go out into the world and buffet with its selfishness; everyone for himself, and Heaven for us all, is the only way to commence in this bitter fight."

To a certain extent he was right, but he forgot there was an all-seeing Father who said that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his knowledge, and that the weak should be raised.

Autumn had now arrived with its russet brown leaves and red berries peeping through the hawthorns; bright, gaudy dahlias and early winter roses, named chrysanthemum, made a brave show in the trim gardens of cottages and villas at Clapham, where Valence and her old nurse had taken up their abode.

It was a humble little house in brick and mortar, a row with a tiny forecourt that was a blaze with simple flowers. A brass plate on the door indicated that Mrs. Clark was a monthly nurse.

Valence had recovered her usual pretty fawnish colour and the brilliance of her eyes. If anything, she looked more bewitching, for a certain pensive sweetness that pervaded her whole manner lent a dignity that lovely as she was she had lacked.

"So you are bent upon leaving old nursey, puppet?" Well, though it will be hard to part with you I shall bear it bravely, for I know it is not good for you to be cooped up with an old woman all the best and sweetest days of your young life. You will not quite forget me, that's one comfort."

"Forget you that have been more than a mother! When I do my Heaven forget me. No, you dear, faithful old love, I am going to earn sufficient to keep us both comfortable. You shall not go out nursing then, but I will nurse and pet you instead."

A mischievous smile entered the old lady's face as she said,—

"Suppose Mr. Right should pop on the scene, and find a situation for my birdie where no mistress reigns but herself, eh?"

"I know what you mean. If I should marry well, if that should ever take place, you will live with me like old times. You shall have the prettiest room in the house, but"—this wistfully—"that is never likely to occur."

"Who knows," retorted Mrs. Clark, sagely; "I've heard many girls declare the same, but they have generally changed their minds."

The eventual morning arrived, and the humble little home at Clapham was all bustle and confusion—boxes heaped up enveloped neatly with their orthodox, holland coats, tickets fastened carefully, denoting their owner's destination.

A hasty breakfast by a half burnt-up fire, little blue hands nipped with the early morning frost as they tried to fasten the packages and open others to add something that had been forgotten, all told the sad tale of a parting from the nervous old soul who split the coffee as she tried to hold it to her darling's lips as the old four-wheeler drove up.

"Good-bye, dear, darling old nurse. May Heaven bless and keep you," she said, bursting into tears that would come in spite of all her assumed bravery, as she threw her arms about her faithful friend's neck, and hugged her before entering the vehicle.

One last, longing look, and she was being whirled along towards Waterloo.

CHAPTER V.

VALENCE sat muffled up in her sealskin jacket—relics of better days—in a second-class carriage, bound for Penrose Court. Poor child, she looked anything but happy as the iron steed dashed past undulating parks, rich with the red-brown trees of autumn, past quiet pools and churches in among the hills. On it rushed madly, first out of sunlight into mist, then again out of mist into glaring sunlight.

Very chilled and lonely was she that long, interminable journey.

"At last," she murmured, as the train stopped, "I am at my journey's end;" but a trembling dread possessed her when she stepped out on a bleak, country station, the platform being very small, and open to the keen blasts.

As far as she could see in the gloom all looked open, drear, and bare.

"Miss Eldon is called for," said a porter, as she gave up her ticket.

"I am Miss Eldon," she returned.

"Here is the lady, Mr. Sears," said the man to a coachman who stepped out of the gloom.

"Lady Penrose has sent her compliments to you, miss, and begs you will excuse her driving over to meet you," said the servant, politely. "Are these yours?" pointing to the luggage just hurled from the van.

"Yes," she aid, gently.

Certainly it seemed that her lines were cast very pleasantly, to judge from that handsomely-appointed carriage, with its warm, crimson satin linings and cosy foot-warmer, that had been considerably placed for her especial comfort.

"Lady Penrose must be very thoughtful," thought Valence. "The dear old doctor said I should like her. This is the lodge, I suppose," as the carriage passed a trellised-covered cottage, from which came a ruddy glow from a bright fire.

The next moment she saw a wide open door, and a brilliantly-lighted hall, and two or three magnificent personages in black plush, with gorgeous silver ornamentation, symbols of liveried woe in the doorway, waiting to convey her belongings and self out of the carriage.

"Good evening," said a middle-aged person, in a black silk, rustling dress, and pearl-grey ribbons in her cap. "Step this way, Miss Eldon. Tea is laid for you in your room," leading her to the west side of the mansion.

A look of genuine pleasure lit up Valence's sweet face, when her eyes took at a glance

one of the cosiest home pictures she had seen since she left her own home.

A blazing fire in a blue-tiled grate, a chintz-covered couch, all forget-me-nots and white lilac, a writing-table with numerous magazines drawn up to the fire, a tray sparkling with antique silver and priceless china.

"Anything you require, please ring this bell," said the housekeeper, "when the maid my lady has ordered to attend you will come immediately. Tea will be served at once, if you wish it."

"Thank you. I should like it very much. Travelling is sorry work," smiling kindly.

Very nice, well conducted girl! Will suit my lady admirably," said the worthy woman, approvingly. "Evidently seen better days. Poor thing, she is in deep mourning too, like us!"

The summons at last came for Valence to meet the—her—mistress. Yes, harsh as the word sounded it was the palpable truth. She, the petted heiress, who had refused a duke, was now but a kind of upper servant.

"I must apologise for not coming to welcome you, Miss Eldon," said a rich, but girlish voice, as a beautiful petite dark girl, in trailing, crêpe robes, came forward, holding out taper fingers ablaze with jewels, to greet her new companion.

"You have been very kind to me," said Valence, returning the warm pressure with beaming, grateful eyes.

"So you have lost some one dear to you," placing a lounge with her own fair hands opposite for her protégée.

"Yes, my lady, I have lost all. I mean that my dear father was all I had in the world to love."

"I can sympathise with you, for I lost my mother a month back, and my father I never knew, so you see we are both orphans; but we must not dwell on past sorrows so soon. Dinner will be ready in about ten minutes. If it is not asking too much I should like you to dine with me. I am full of whims and fancies; and I always think that people become quicker acquainted over the dinner-table. There goes the gong. You need take very little trouble over your toilette. Travellers must have licence."

"How beautiful she is!" thought Valence, "and so kind. I know I shall be happy, and love her very dearly. My only fear was that she might be like Blanche. How nice this all is! To-night I must write my good news to dear nursey."

Days lengthened into weeks, and weeks into months, and Valence was as happy as a bird in her lovely home; and both girls had become great friends. Lady Penrose had taken an immense fancy for her beautiful companion, and began to confide even her little secrets. She was no longer Miss Eldon; but simply Valence, oftener dear Valence.

"I have a visitor about to invade our hermitage," Lady Penrose said, one morning at breakfast.

"A lady?" questioned Valence, smiling sweetly, and passing over a cup of chocolate.

"No, a gentleman, one whom I have not seen since poor mamma's death. Had things not been so bad, perhaps I should have been somebody else," with a rosy flush that heightened her dark, eastern beauty.

"I see you would have had a golden circlet. In that case I should never have known you."

"Why not, Valence? A husband would have to indulge me in everything. You know I am rather exacting and spoilt. Well, to return to my subject, the gentleman is coming here to-morrow, so I want you to help me fill the rooms with flowers. It is my delight to welcome him with all that is bright and gay, for I must tell you he is very dear to me."

"Rely on my best efforts," she returned, joyously. "Every primrose, violet, and daffodil shall be culled from the woods and dell to do honour to your cavalier."

"Now I think you ought to know what kind and manner of man he is since you take so much interest in his welcome," laughing,

archly. "Well, to commence. He is tall, dark, but not the kind of hero you know they picture in novels. Oh, dear, no! not half so perfect; but, nevertheless, he is my hero, and can you guess why?"

"I fear not, my lady."

"Well, because he never flattered me in my life, or told me I was pretty or anything of the usual sweet nothings others poured into my ears till I fairly disliked them. He is noble, refined; but faultless. Talks very little; but his words are wisdom and divine poetry."

"Oh, forbear," laughed Valence. "You have set me on the *qui vive* to see the man who could have won so graphic a description. He must indeed be a splendid character!"

"Your curiosity will soon be gratified then; but now we must plunder the hothouses and conservatories."

"I am off to the woods. My contribution shall be wild flowers, dewy and sparkling with nature's own refreshing dews," and away Valence ran, only waiting a minute to tie a wrap around her shoulders, and don a broad, straw hat, with its band of raps.

"Come in here, my friend is sure to be in our favourite spot." In another second Lady Penrose entered the morning-room, the light of a great joy in her face, leading a gentleman.

Valence stood still, almost petrified with astonishment as Lord Castleford stood before her.

"Miss Eldon and I have met before, Lady Penrose," he said, as he bowed, and held out his hand, which she took mechanically, noting that it trembled visibly.

"How strange! Where did you meet? Why did you not tell me, Miss Eldon?" her ladyship replied, rather coldly.

"I never knew your friend's name, my lady," she said; "till this moment."

"True, I forgot. Well I am glad to see you are good friends," all vexation leaving her handsome face.

"I am deeply grieved, believe me, Miss Eldon, to see you have sustained so great a loss," he said, feelingly. "I had no idea that such sorrow had entered your home."

"Indeed!" incredulously. "It has been no secret, my lord, all London knew of my father's sudden death."

"I have not been near town, since I left it nearly twelve months back," this reproachfully; "or had any conversation with any of my old friends or acquaintances, so it has come upon me strangely sudden," and a tender yearning came into his heart to gather her in his arms, this fair girl in black, soft clinging robes, who looked so pained and pitiful, placed as she was, in so awkward a position.

The trio chatted on, their conversation becoming less strained as the little cloud in the domestic horizon cleared off and Lady Penrose became radiant again.

"I never was more surprised in my life, as to day, at your knowing Lord Castleford," remarked her ladyship, just before retiring for the night, as the two girls sat in the dressing-room chatting. "How long have you known him?"

"Since I left school."

"Dear me; why you are older friends than I imagined. I am rather glad, because you and he will be great friends when we are married; and that rather worried me, in case we should have to part, and that would make me very miserable, dear."

"His wife!" she thought; "and live under the same roof! Oh! if she only knew, how she would hate me."

"You don't answer; surely you do like him?" this anxiously.

"I was thinking. I beg your pardon; you were saying you were going to be married. I was not aware you were even engaged."

"No, I meant to surprise you, and show my hero first. It was a little plan I had formed."

"Of course you are very much attached to him?" Valence said dreamily.

"I am more than that; I am deeply in love. He is perfection in my eyes. I have but one misgiving, and I will confess it, that he does

not love me in return with that depth of passion that I would give all I have in the world to possess. He is always calm, stately, courteous, and cold. Oh! that I had the power to break through that barrier of ice. Sometimes I almost pray for my beauty to be increased, that I may win him—his admiration. I would that I were a goddess for his sake," her lovely face glowing, her eyes sparkling with the soft rosy glow of love's young dream.

Surely she was beautiful enough to win the heart of a less impressionable nature than Trevanian's, thought Valence sadly, as she made up her mind to leave Penrose Court before the wedding, which could not take place for several months.

"I wish you every happiness," said Valence, steadying her voice. "You deserve it, and he is good and true."

"You really think so?" she said, eagerly.

"I do!"

"Thank you, dear Valence, for those words. You have completed my joy, for somehow I could not chase away a doubt whether you thought well of him; your manner was strange at first."

"That was surprise; but good-night, dear Lady Penrose, I am rather tired."

"Oh! the torture and misery," she groaned, when she gained her chamber. "I almost plead his cause; I who love him so madly. Oh, Heaven! grant me strength to bear this; he left my side and went straight into her arms, Oh! the treachery, and I said he was true because she loves him; at least he shall be true to her. I will bear my cross, and he shall never know what I suffer; nor she either, who has trusted me implicitly. I love her and never shall it be said I acted the part of a snake, to bite the hand that has warmed and fed it; but oh! it is hard to part with all that makes life dear. First papa, then fortune, and now Trevanian, and this haven of peace and rest, where I have been so happy."

Her pillow was wet with tears, wrung from a storm-tossed soul; but sleep, nature's greatest restorer, reigned supreme and bright. Angels must have guarded her, for her face became wreathed in radiant smiles. She had passed into dreamland, where crystal rivers and glorious flowers bloomed, and Trevanian was crowning her with a chaplet of roses, and looking into her face with the old lovelight in his eyes.

"No darling, my love, you shall not evade me now!"

"Unhand me, Lord Idmiston; how dare you detain me?" gasped Valence, as her basket of primroses lay scattered on the soft, green turf.

"Hard words, but I dare anything now that I know you were true."

"True!" she exclaimed, scornfully. "Does it become Lord Idmiston to speak of truth to me?"

"You are cruel," he said humbly. "Heaven knows, I was true until I thought you cared for the duke."

"Is it an evidence of your constancy to come to Penrose Court as the accepted husband of its mistress, and waylay me with words that mean treason to me and your affianced wife? Go, and never come near me."

"Do you think I ever intended making Lady Penrose my wife, when I found you free?" he exclaimed, passionately. "Oh! my darling, don't turn from me so cruelly. Listen to me; do not condemn me unheard. I never loved Lady Penrose, but unfortunately, I raised hopes in her heart, and thinking you were lost to me for ever I permitted myself to be drawn into an engagement that I would have given worlds to have undone."

"You mean to tell me that, and yet you were about to lead to the altar a girl whom you did not love?" she said, excitedly.

"I swear it. No woman will ever take the love that lies in every fibre of my being. See, my darling, I am suing to you; do not leave me in despair!"

"I will not—no, I dare not—listen to another

word," she cried, tearing herself from his loved presence, and running like a frightened fawn out of his sight.

"What ails you, Valence?" asked Lady Penrose, as the girl, panting and out of breath, tore into the easement, with hot, flushed cheeks, and frightened eyes.

"Let me go," she cried; "I am ill, tired, anything! Oh! don't delay me, I implore you."

"Poor dear, she is quite feverish," said her Ladyship, concernedly. "I must send for Dr. Richards at once; I fear she has got over-heated."

In a short time Lord Idmiston arrived, and begged for a few minutes conversation.

What passed never was divulged, but Lady Penrose looked pale, and her eyes had an expression of determination, though they were glistening with tears when she came out of the library.

"You have come to reproach me," moaned Valence, when she saw Lady Penrose enter her room.

"No, dear, sacrificing Valence, I have come to repair a mistake, and to restore to you the man who never cared for me, but loves you. It was all my own fault. I—I hoped to have won his heart, but I now know it is best as it is," faintly, as the heroic girl wound her arms around Valence's waist and drew her gently to her bosom. "Don't think I shall feel it much. I shall soon forget it all; I should have learnt to hate him if he had slighted me after I was a wife."

"My more than sister," said Valence, kissing the beautiful face tenderly.

In another moment Lady Penrose placed Valence's hand in Trevanian's, saying,—

"Take her, she is yours never to part," and glided out of the room, softly.

[THE END.]

STANLEY IN THE CONGO.

H. H. Johnson, in a recent book on the Congo region, gives the following description of his meeting with Stanley at Vivi, in a station crowded with Zanzibaris: "Here he was, seated on his camp-chair, his pipe in his mouth, and a semicircle of grinning kinglets squatting in front of him, some of them smoking long-stemmed, little-bowed pipes in complacent silence, and others putting many questions to 'Bula Matade' as to his recent journey to Europe—to 'Mputo,' the land beyond the sea, as they call it—and receiving his replies with expressions of incredulous wonder, tapping their open mouths with their hands.

"I paused involuntarily to look at this group, for Stanley had not yet seen me approaching, and was unconscious of observation.

"Perhaps he never posed better for his picture than at that moment, as he sat benignly chatting and smoking with the native chiefs, his face lighting up with amusement at their naive remarks, while the bearing of his head still retained that somewhat proud carriage that inspired these African chieftains with a real respect for his wishes and a desire to retain his friendship.

"Any one observing Stanley at this moment could comprehend the great influence he possesses over the native mind on the Congo, and could realize how that influence must tend towards peace wherever Stanley's fame has reached, for to attack a friend of Stanley's seems to the natives scarcely less futile than attacking Stanley himself.

"Stanley turned suddenly as the chief of the station introduced me, and welcomed me in a thoroughly cordial manner; then, dismissing the natives who had examined me curiously under the belief that I was 'Bula Matade's' son, he sent Dualla for some tea.

"Dualla was a handsome Somali lad, son of the chief of the police at Aden, and versed in many European and African languages. He had been Stanley's body-servant on the Congo since 1879."

DRAWING THE LINE!

Mrs. SLOPER was next neighbour to the Easys when they moved into the cottage they had bought at Waterbridge, and on the very first night she tumbled over the scattered bits of furniture in the passage, and appeared in their midst unexpectedly to borrow a little salt. She said it was so nice to have neighbours again, and that Mrs. Easy looked so sweet she knew she wouldn't mind.

At midnight she roused them from their slumbers to inquire if they had any cholera mixture, for little Sammy had been eating too many green apples, and she thought he would die. She said she was thankful Mrs. Easy had moved in, and that but for that circumstance she might have lost her darling. Mrs. Easy was thankful, too, and the two women embraced with tears, and Mrs. Sloper also borrowed some mustard for a plaster.

The next day she sent Sammy, fully recovered and with his pockets full of green fruit, to ask for the coal hammer, the handle having come off of theirs, and a rolling-pin.

Fortunately the Easys possessed three hammers and two rolling-pins, so they did not feel disturbed by the fact that the borrowed articles were not returned; but after a short interval filled with loans of coal, potatoes, bread and cheese, Mrs. Sloper came herself to borrow the folding table, a pair of scissors, a pattern of a basque, and a low nursing-chair. She was going to make some dresses, and if Mrs. Easy would step over and fit her she'd be obliged.

Mrs. Easy did it, and made the button-holes, too. Mrs. Sloper never could learn to make a button-hole. The table, the scissors, the nursing-chair and the pattern remained at Mrs. Sloper's.

The next week Mrs. Sloper borrowed a silk mantle and a pair of goloshes.

Mrs. Easy this time grew bold enough to beg that she would send them home when she returned.

Mrs. Sloper said "Of course," rather shortly, but when Sammy was seen running up to the door it was not to bring back those articles. What he wanted was the baby's perambulator and a market basket.

Mrs. Easy watched them go with despair in her eyes; but nothing was borrowed for some time after this; nothing returned, either; until, at last, one morning Mr. Sloper himself called. He said he should have been before; they were so much indebted to such good-natured neighbours. He hoped the Easys would command him at any time; and might his wife have the sewing-machine for one day? He meant to buy her one. What make would Mrs. Easy recommend? He hoped she'd give his little woman the benefit of her advice. In fact, nothing would please him better than to have his wife model herself after such a lady.

In the end he walked off with the sewing-machine.

Mrs. Easy did her own stitching by hand, and waited for it.

So Christmas time came, and with it cards for a party. The Slopers so hoped they'd all come.

Having accepted, what was more natural than to take an interest in the proceedings? To land sugar and the ice-cream freezer, butter and the egg-beater, the cut-glass decanters, and the best table-cloths, the spice box entire, and lots of other things. Finally, Mrs. Sloper, with her gown tucked up, and her eyes sparkling, ran in to say that they thought a dance would be nice, and could Mrs. Easy spare the piano for one evening?

"There's nobody to move it," said Mrs. Easy, rejoiced to have an excuse. "I'm so sorry."

Mrs. Sloper laughed, and went to the window. Four big labourers appeared, and without any preliminary direction shouldered the instrument and luged it away. They bumped it along the road, but by main strength they got

it at last to the Slopers' door; and Mrs. Sloper took her leave, carrying the music stool and antimacassar herself.

The appearance of her adored piano gave Mrs. Easy a great deal of unhappiness that evening. It had a deep scratch on the cover, and one of the keys wouldn't lift. However, she played waltzes, polkas, and sets of quadrilles most of the evening, and as the company went to supper in relays—old folks first, and young folks last, as Mrs. Sloper said—found very little left but a cup of cold coffee and a turkey bone when her duties were finished.

And yet she did not give Mrs. Sloper piece of her mind as she had intended. We all have some particular weakness. Mrs. Easy's was the desire for praise, for gratitude when she did kind things; and Mrs. Sloper had squeezed her by both hands, and said,

"Oh, how sweet you are! I knew you would be before I ever spoke to you by your face. I never had a sister. And do you know what I say to Mr. Sloper? 'She's the sister of my soul. She is quite too lovely for anything.'"

And so she waited for the return of her piano for a week without a murmur.

But there is an end to everything. One day she saw Mrs. Sloper driving up the road in the clergyman's new light trap, wearing her mantle, and saw her stop with her usual little giggle at the garden gate.

Mrs. Easy had taken a holiday, and was lying on the lawn reading; and she had her sewing under the awning and was extremely happy and comfortable. If Mrs. Sloper had come to ask her to drive she had resolved not to go. She should say: "My husband has so few holidays I cannot leave home to-day." But Mrs. Sloper did no such thing.

"You dear, good soul!" she cried, as soon as she was within speaking distance, "I've come to borrow your husband!"

"To borrow what?" ejaculated Mrs. Easy.

"Your husband," said Mrs. Sloper. "Sloper is in Andover. I'm going to a picnic. I want a beau and some one to drive. May I have him?"

"You ought to ask Mr. Easy himself," said Mrs. Easy, very coldly.

"I shan't," said Mrs. Sloper, playfully. "I came to borrow him of you. You'll lend him, won't you? And I shall tell everyone that good angel, Mrs. Easy, lent me her husband."

Mrs. Sloper was looking very pretty. The embroidered mantle became her vastly. She had a dainty sky-blue bonnet on her blonde head, and she smiled at Mr. Easy out of the corner of her eye.

Mrs. Easy feared that she saw on Mr. Easy's face a shadow of a desire to be Mrs. Sloper's escort to the picnic. This arranged the affair. The time had come for drawing the line, and she was determined to do it.

"You insist that I shall answer, Mrs. Sloper?" she asked.

"Yes," lisped Mrs. Sloper. "You'll lend him, won't you?"

"No," said Mrs. Easy, in a very decided tone, "I'm afraid I shouldn't get him back. I let you have my piano. That hasn't been returned. My sewing-machine—I do without it now. My mantle—you wear it, not I. My goloshes, where are they? The baby's perambulator—your baby now takes the air in it. My sewing-machine and cutting-board and scissors—I haven't seen them since; my rolling-pin and ice-cream freezer and egg-beater. It's the same with all; but I promised to cleave unto my husband until death do us part; and you can't have him, Mrs. Sloper. You surely never would return him."

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed Mrs. Sloper, turning pink. "You wicked woman! You nasty thing! You mean thing! You shall have all your horrid things back. Don't you want your spoonful of salt, too? Oh you mean, mean wretch!"

Then tearing the mantle from her shoulders she threw it at Mr. Easy's head, as he struggled to his feet, and drove away. She borrowed a shawl from the clergyman's wife, and took

her eldest boy for company; but before her return Mrs. Easy had proceeded to her neighbour's house, collected her goods and chattels, and had them conveyed home.

The piano was out of tune and scratched; the sewing-machine had lost its band; onions had been kept in the ice-cream freezer; the mantle had a grease spot in the shoulder; one of the rungs of the chair was loose; and it was plain that Mrs. Sloper had whipped the children with the egg-beater. The perambulator had been used to bring groceries home in, and the points of the scissors were gone. So was the sisterly love of Mrs. Sloper who goes about abusing Mrs. Easy at the meanest, most jealous thing she ever knew, and borrows of the clergyman's wife, although that long-suffering lady begins to show signs of revolt.

M. T.

A MAN'S valour had better flow from the ends of his fingers than ooze from the end of his tongue.

Her Majesty has invested Prince Louis of Battenberg with the Grand Cross of the Bath on the occasion of his marriage to her granddaughter.

HEALTH is the bed-plate on which the whole mental machinery may rest and work. If this be cracked or displaced, all the mechanism that stands on it will be jarred and disturbed, and made ineffective.

THE WHITE ELEPHANT has already caused trouble across the Atlantic. Charges have been brought before the Philadelphia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, asserting that the whiteness of Young Taloung's forefeet was produced artificially; and that in Liverpool fifty applications of whitening and sizing were used, closing the pores of the skin, and raising sores, which endangered the poor beast's life. Meanwhile the sacred elephant inhabits gorgeous quarters in New York, and has been so carefully shielded from cold that, when he first landed, he wore a remarkable suit of quilted trousers, jacket, and head-covering.

NOR HOME.—That is no true home where every domestic duty is performed grudgingly; and she is no true wife and mother who feels the comfort and necessities of her family beneath her careful consideration. To see the head of a family creeping around to the back door, so as to change his boots and coat in the washroom, is pitiful in the extreme. To watch his startled look as he hears the warning—"John," is a study. He knows he has done something, or else he hasn't; and while he agitates the subject of omission and commission, he is informed that he has brought "med upon the step," or, "not to keep that door open." This mistaken idea of a home is like presenting children with toys which must be put away and never played with; and she who gives the air of bondage to so important a branch of labour makes of herself and family slaves who never realize that, instead of bondage and drudgery, housekeeping is a happy art. Mothers too often refuse their daughters the knowledge of cooking; it is too much trouble they say; "while I am showing you I can do it myself without half the bother," so that instead of obtaining practice while young they are subject to mortifying failures when they first enter homes of their own. The bread is poor; the meats are anything but well served; the coffee is muddy; pies not done; and consequently the wife is all anxiety and fear. She dreads each meal, she dislikes to "touch the flour." And the poor husband; well, it isn't at all like his "mother's table," and while bearing up bravely and saying, "practice makes perfect, my dear," he groans and wishes "that maxim had specified the time required for perfection." Ignorance of household duties and years of experimenting hinder many a poor man from becoming wealthy—and surely make miserable those families which might otherwise be prosperous and happy.

FACETIE.

Adoration battle.—One with pine knots.

The crow is the great British corn reaver.

The Girtin girls' favorite Roman hero.—Marinus.

The champion light-weight.—The half sovereigns go.

“Where would we be without women?” asks a writer. “We would be all right; but the little pup dog—where would it be?

The small boy who hangs round the parson and makes faces at his sister's beau should be punished for contempt of court.

The word “protest” has been happily described as meaning, “I hope you won't do it but if you do, I cannot help it.”

A Jeannette woman dresses her hair only once in four days. This gives the rest of the family an occasional glance at the mirror.

They say dogs don't reason, but how he will think that a dog tries to reach a conclusion when he chases his tail.

“TALKING about the jaws of death!” exclaimed a man who is living with his third widdling wife. “I tell you they are nothing to the jaws of life!”

Cousin incidents are now holding guessing matches. They sit out in the garden and guess whether it's a potato-beetle or an armyworm that's crawling down their back.

“My mazza-mala now fan is hand-painted!” exclaimed little Jacky, boastfully. “Pooh! Who cares? Our whole fence is!” retorted little Dick.

“You are the most stock-optional I ever saw,” remarked a young lady to a youth whom she met at what's-pull; to which he retorted: “And you are just as sweet as you are sensible.” Another long-year horror.

A French marquis was riding out one day, when he passed an old priest trotting along contentedly on a quiet donkey. “Ha! ha!” exclaimed the marquis, “how goeth the ass, good father?” “On horseback, my son, on horseback!” replied the priest.

A snail-shank sot remarked, with the air of an instructor:—“People should never laugh at their own jokes. I never once think of a juggling at mine.” “Does anybody else?” wittily asked a young lady.

There is a single sentence in the foreign testament act which contains six hundred words. A longer sentence was that of a judge the other day. It contained twenty years.

A LADY speaker was thus introduced to her waiting audience by a hasty presiding officer:—“I have the pleasure of presenting to you Mrs. —, who will give you an account of the reminiscences of her past life, which I am sure will interest you all.”

A Scotswoman, having a warm dispute with a London cabinman about his fare, said:—“I'd have ye ken I am a Mackintosh.” To which the cockney replied:—“You may be a hum-drum for all I know, but my lark is eight-sparce.”

Mrs. Havers (old drapery clerk):—“If you will cut me a small sample of this I will find a sufficiently dressmaker how many yards I need, and can send for the goods by the maid.” *Blunt Terrible Hunter.*—“Why, mamma, that's just what you said in all the other shops.”

“No me to take your medicine,” said a patient to a doctor, “for I never expect to get well; I could not pay you!” “Had you really intended to pay me?” the doctor asked. “Yes, sir.” “Well, then, I'll change your treatment. It's a very hard matter and somewhat unprofessional, but as you entertain some idea of paying me, you'd better take a little of this harmless powder instead of the dose I had mixed for you.”

“WHAT is a lake?” asked the teacher. A bright little Irish boy raised his hand. “Well, Mikey, what is it?” “Sure it's a hole in the little, num.”

Scone.—A Scotch coast public-house. Tonal:—“Waiter, dish sweet ale's soon, man!” Tongal:—“An' dish bitter peer ish awfu' sweet!” The waiter, in his hurry, had reversed the order.

“Shall I take your love to your mother?” said a lady visitor, who was going to see the mother in question, to a little child of three years. “She has my love,” was the quaint reply.

“I wear a mourning costume; I have just lost my uncle.” The tailor brushed away a tear. “Well, why that tear?” “Because you lose only an uncle, whilst I lose a cussome!”

A wif will have his joke even at the expense of his gallantry. It was Lord Houghton who, when a lady, more beautiful in her own eyes than in those of the world, was boasting that she had hundreds of men at her feet, remarked, in an undertone, “Chiropodists.”

Wines Kean was playing *Louis XI.* at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, a rather laughable thing occurred: When the attendants announced “The King is dead!” a pious Irishman exclaimed, “And may the Lord have mercy on his guilty soul!”

“I declare, Charley!” exclaimed Clara, “you take the words right out of my mouth!” “Oh, mammal!” piped in the little pitcher, “now I know what Clara and Charley were doing out in the hall where she let him in!”

“You have a wide view from these mountains,” said an Englishman to a shepherd in a remote district in Aberdeenshire. “That's true,” answered the shepherd. “You can see America from here,” said the traveller. “Mickle farren than that,” replied the shepherd. “How can that be?” “When the mist drives off, ye can see the moon.”

“How do you like the character of St. Paul?” asked a parson of his landlady, one day, during a conversation about the old saints and apostles. “Ah!” said she; “he was a good, clever old soul, I know, for he once said, you know, that we must eat what is set before us, and ask no questions for conscience sake. I always thought I should like him for a boarder.”

“They are not many, Lord Adolphus,” said Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns, pointing to her books; “but they are all friends—dear old friends.” Noble Poet (taking down a volume of his own poems and finding the leaves uncut):—“Ah! hum! I'm glad to find that you don't cut all your old friends, Mrs. de Tomkyns!” Mrs. P. de T. is at a loss for once.

A WIFE'S THOUGHTFULNESS.

“I haven't seen your pet dog for several days,” said a husband to his wife.

“No,” she replied; “the fact is I have given him away.”

“Why, you needn't have done that. I had no particular objection to him.”

“Oh, I know that; but I thought that it was not right for me to have a pet dog about the house when I have such a good, kind husband to lavish my affections upon.”

The husband sank into a chair with a deep sigh.

“How much do you want, Mary?” he asked, as he drew his purse from his pocket; “it can't be a sealskin coat, for the winter is nearly over.”

“No,” she said, it is not a sealskin coat; but I would really like a new silk for the spring, and you know it's got to be bought and made, and all that.”

“Now,” he said, as he handed her the money, “what proof of your affection will you give me when you want another dress, since you have given away your dog?”

“Oh,” she sweetly replied, “I've given the dog to my sister, and I can get him back again.”

“Pa, do questions ever get mad?” “No, my son, but sometimes we get mad at questions.” “Well, pa, if questions don't get mad, what does the paper mean when it says 'a mitch-axed question?'”

“Use your fork, Johnnie! Have you forgotten so soon what I told you about using your fingers?” “Well, mamma, fingers were made before forks!” “Yes, I know very well they were; but not your fingers.”

A Miss BUCHANAN once rallying her cousin, an officer, on his courage, said:—“Now, Mr. Harry, do you really mean to tell me you can walk up to a canon's mouth without fear?” “Yes,” was the quick reply, “or to a Buchanan's either.” And he did it.

An old bachelor was recently heard saying to a young lady, “There is more jewellery worn now-a-days than when I was young, but there is one piece I often admired which I don't often see now.” “What is that?” asked the miss. “A thimble,” was the reply.

An individual applies to a cab company for a situation. “Do you know how to drive?” “Yes, sir.” “You know that you must be polite with all your passengers?” “Aye!” “And honest. For example, what would you do if you should find in your cab a purse containing £10,000?” “Nothing at all. I should live on my income!”

WHERE HE HAD IT.—Mr. Greatheart was walking down the Avenue on Thursday when he met Mr. Pioniboy. “Howdy?” said Mr. Greatheart. “How is the folks?” “Not well,” dolefully responded Mr. Pioniboy. “I have the pneumonia in my domicile.” “That's bad,” returned Mr. Greatheart. “I had it once, but I had it in my right lung.” They separated.

A MAN lately entered a tavern in France, looking dreadfully wearied, and with a face as long as a crescent moon. He seated himself languidly at a table where a previous customer was taking his glass of absinthe. “Sir,” said the latter, sympathetically, “you appear much fatigued.” “Yes,” replied the other; “head-work, sir, head-work.” “Dramatic critic, possibly?” “No, sir; I am a hairdresser, and to-day shaved twenty stubby beards, and cut the hair of thirty heads.”

ONCE upon a time a traveller arrived late at an hotel, and found all the rooms engaged. Here was a sad case. But his ready wit did not desert him. He walked into the gentleman's room, and, standing in the middle of the floor, said, “Gentlemen, I am happy to see so many of you here to-night. I am a book-agent, and I want to show you—” Before he could utter another word the whole company had taken to the woods, and he had his choice of apartments.

WILLIAM PENN and Thomas Story, travelling together in Virginia, in the ante-revolutionary days, were caught in a shower of rain, and unceremoniously sheltered themselves from it in a tobacco warehouse, the owner of which, happening to be in, thus accosted them: “You have a great deal of impudence to trespass on my premises. You enter without leave. Do you know who I am?” To which was answered: “No.” “Why, then, I would have you to know that I am a justice of the peace.” Thomas Story replied: “My friend here makes such things as thou art—he is the Governor of Pennsylvania.”

THE PUZZLE.—A certain country squire was the most uncalculating of mortals in money matters. He began to build a house, but his original design grew, with wing on wing, until it flew away with all his cash capital, and more too. He was in debt to architects, carpenters, masons, and for everything about his new dwelling. One bright morning in March, as he leaned meditatively over a fence, looking towards his Aladdin palace, a stranger passing by asked: “Sir, whom does that handsome edifice belong to?” “That,” said the squire, with a sparkle in his eye, “is just what I am trying to find out!”

SOCIETY.

The day of the Royal marriage was marked by an unusual number of weddings, those of Lord William Compton and the Hon. Mary Frances Baring, and of Sir Guy Campbell, Bart., with Miss Lehmann attracting the most attention. The latter young lady quitting the luxurious house of fond parents (who are losing their only daughter) in Berkeley-square, where once Horace Walpole lived, deserves credit for the originality of all the arrangements of her wedding. It is quite wearisome to read the almost exactly similar accounts of wedding functions, and especially of the invariable nun's veilings for bridesmaids' dresses.

The handsome mausoleum erected to the memory of Princess Alice, and which also marks her tomb, is a favourite resort of Her Majesty. It is situated on the Rosenthaler, about an hour's walk from the town of Darmstadt, and one of the most interesting spots in the neighbourhood to those who are able to appreciate the sterling qualities of the late Grand Duchess. It will be remembered that Princess Alice only filled the dignity of Grand Duchess a few months before her death, the present Grand Duke's father being alive before that time; but her charity and zealous activity in good deeds were untiring, and she founded many institutions of which she did not live to see the good results. The present Alice School in Darmstadt, which Princess Beatrice visited the other day, is the outcome of a memorial fund first raised through the instrumentality of the British residents there, and afterwards taken up by the local authorities.—*Society.*

On the Prince and Princess Edward of Saxe-Weimar leaving Portsmouth on May 1st, the officers of the garrison assembled on Southsea Pier to bid them adieu on their proceeding by steamer for the Isle of Wight, their Serene Highnesses proposing to spend a few days at Ventnor. At the meeting of the Portsmouth town committee it was decided to present the Princess with diamond jewels, and to place the portrait of the Prince in the Guildhall.

The Duchess of Wellington gave a concert at Stratfield Saye House on the 18th April, which took place in the fine hall, and proved most successful. The programme included several *morceaux d'ensembles* for harp, organ, and piano, in which the Duchess took a leading part at the harp, playing with precision and execution. The Duchess of Wellington wore black satin, richly trimmed with jet, the corsage being ornamented with white lace and moan feathers. Most of the company wore either black or white; Mrs. Darby Griffith, black velvet, trimmed with fine old point; Miss Lidwell, an elegant white moire dress, with tablier of white embroidered jet, with train simply plaited into waist.

The late Duke of Buccleuch had seven country seats in addition to a town house, a distinction he shared with the Duke of Sutherland and the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke of Northumberland has six country seats, the Duke of Hamilton, the Duke of Westminster, and the Duke of Rutland, three each. The Duke of Buccleuch had seventeen hereditary titles, an honour only exceeded by the Duke of Argyll, who has twenty. The Duke of Sutherland has eight, but the Duke of Hamilton has fifteen, and the Duke of Argyll has sixteen.

A BRILLIANT ball was given by the bachelors of Clifton on the 23rd ult. at the Victoria Rooms, which were beautifully decorated. The walls of the corridor were festooned with ivy and ornamented with arches of evergreens, studded with bunches of primroses, and hung with numbers of Chinese lanterns. One end of the ball-room was arranged as a drawing-room, and decorated with large mirrors, draped with ruby plush curtains. Above three thousand bunches of primroses were used in the decorations. Dancing was kept up with spirit till past three the following morning. The band of the Royal Marines added not a little to the success of this delightful ball.—*QUEEN.*

STATISTICS.

THE MILITIA.—Of the 172 regiments of Militia to be called out for training in the United Kingdom this year, over 80 will go into camp for the full period of 27 days. The preliminary training for 56 days of the recruits has now begun in the case of 69 regiments in Great Britain and 23 in Ireland. Only five corps are already out for regimental training, the principal part of this work being as usual reserved for the summer months. In Great Britain the total number of corps out will be 127—viz., 21 brigades of Artillery, three corps of Engineers, and 108 battalions of Infantry; and in Ireland, 45—viz. 14 brigades of Artillery and 31 battalions of Infantry.

MORTALITY IN THE NAVY.—A return has been issued relating to the Navy which, among other facts, states the number of lives lost in the service during the past ten years, excluding mortality from natural causes and from war. The total for the ten years is 1,708, of which 1,000 were due to drowning; 423 to wounds, injuries, and explosions; 172 to falls from aloft and 48 to suicide. Considering that nearly 50,000 officers, seamen and marines are constantly abroad, the yearly average of deaths from these causes may be regarded as small, except when it is disturbed by catastrophes such as the sinking of the *Captain* or the explosion on board the *Thunderer*. In the past decade, during which nearly 250 ships have been in commission each year, only seven vessels have foundered, while the strandings and collisions were 63 and 228 respectively. There were also 358 accidents of a minor character, not including gunnery casualties.

GEMS.

He that lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend.

If one were to be worded to death, Italian is the fittest language.

The truly valiant dare everything but doing any other body an injury.

Don't open your purse too hastily or too wide, nor your mouth either.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RESIN.—A small piece of resin dipped in the water which is placed in a vessel on a stove will add a peculiar property to the atmosphere of the room, which will give relief to all persons troubled with a cough. The heat of the water is sufficient to throw off the aroma of the resin, and gives the same relief that is afforded by a camomile, because the evaporation is more durable. The same resin may be used for weeks.

TO PURIFY DAMP CLOSETS.—In damp closets and cupboards generating mildew, a trayfull of quicklime will be found to absorb the moisture and render the air pure. Of course it is necessary to renew the lime from time to time as it becomes fully dried. This remedy will be found useful in safes and strong-rooms, the damp air of which sets frequently most injuriously on the valuable deeds and documents contained therein.

YORKSHIRE PUDDING.—Put seven tablespoonfuls of flour into a round-bottomed bowl, a small teaspoonful of salt, and a dessert-spoonful of baking powder, mix well, then add a little milk just to blend the flour; now add two or three eggs one by one, beating well between each; after the last beat thoroughly for quite five minutes, then gradually add the rest of the milk until a moderately thin batter is made. Have a large tin ready, with a little boiling fat in it; pour in the batter, and bake in a quick oven on the bottom for ten minutes or more, then on the shelf to brown, or under the meat. Serve with gravy or sugar. The tin for that size pudding should be about 20in. square.—*QUEEN.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

LACE.—Lace of the finest sort, which was made in France and Flanders so early as 1320, was excluded from England in 1663, but came into fashion in Queen Elizabeth's Court. In old days an ounce weight of Flanders thread was frequently sold for four pounds sterling; and the value of this, when it was manufactured into lace, was frequently increased to forty pounds, or ten times the value in weight of gold. Hammond, the Nottingham framework knitter, was the first who originated a mode of applying the stocking-frame to the lace manufacture, and the process of "gassing," by which cotton is made equal to the finest thread lace, originated by S. Hall, also of Nottingham. The improvement introduced in the market lace by machinery have greatly lessened the price of the article; thus, a piece of lace which in 1809 cost seventeen pounds is now obtainable for seven shillings.

MILK AS FOOD FOR CHILDREN.—Wherever milk is used plentifully, there the children grown into robust men and women. Whenever the place is usurped by tea we have degeneracy swift and certain. Dr. Ferguson, who has devoted a large share of his attention to this subject, has ascertained, from careful measurements of numerous factory children, that between thirteen and fourteen years they grow nearly four times as fast on milk for breakfast and supper as on tea and coffee, a fact which shows the benefit of proper diet. No diet is so suitable for growing children as well-cooked oatmeal porridge or milk. Owing to its easy digestibility it is of equal benefit to invalids, and, more especially dyspeptics, who often regain health and pick up flesh at a wonderfully rapid rate on milk and good bread. Good as cows' milk is for children and invalids the milk of the goat is much better; and it often happens that persons will thrive and grow strong on the latter, who could not digest the former. For this reason goat's milk is largely prescribed by the faculty, and would be more so if it were more plentiful. Dr. Pye Chavasse says:—"The fittest, healthiest children are those who for the first four or five years of their lives are fed principally upon it."

ALL ABOUT FANS.—Kao Si was the first lady who carried a fan. She lived in ages which are past and for the most part forgotten, and she was the daughter of a Chinese mandarin. Whoever saw a mandarin, even on a tea chest, without his fan? In China and Japan every one has a fan; and there are fans of all sorts for everybody. The Japanese waves his fan at you when he meets you by way of greeting; and the beggar who solicits alms has the exceedingly small chin "made on purpose" for charity presented to him on the tip of the fan. In ancient times, amongst Greeks and Romans, fans seem to have been enormous; they were generally made of feathers, and carried by slaves over the heads of their masters and mistresses, to protect them from the sun, or waved before them to stir the air. Catherine de Medici carried the first folding fan ever seen in France; and in the time of Louis XIV. the fan was a gorgeous thing, often covered with jewels, and worth a small fortune. In England they were the fashion in the time of Henry VIII. A fan set in diamonds was once given to Queen Elizabeth upon New Year's Day. The Mexican feather fans which Cortez had from Montezuma were marvels of beauty; and in Spain a large black fan is the favourite. It is said that the use of a fan is as carefully taught in that country as any other branch of education, and that by a well-known code of signals a Spanish lady can carry on a long conversation with anybody, especially an admirer. The Japanese criminal of rank is politely executed by means of a fan. On being sentenced to death he is presented with a fan, which he must receive with a low bow, and as he bows, presto! the executioner draws his sword and cuts his head off. *Tu fu*, there is a fan for every occasion in Japan.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. N.—We do not recommend anti-fat patent remedies. Exercise and a meat diet are the best and simplest preventatives.

C. M.—To remove India ink marks, apply a blister to the arm and let it remain open for a short while. When it heals, new skin will have grown over the part, completely obliterating the marks.

C. T.—The word grandmother occurs in second Timothy, Chapter 1, verse 5. 2. The reference to Huldah, the prophetess, who dwelt in Jerusalem in the college, will be found in second Kings, Chapter xxii, verse 14. 3. Moes. 4. We should think not.

G. V.—1. We are unable to say whether it is possible to make the substitute you suggest. 2. Without a patent you cannot dispose of it to advantage. 3. We can make no estimate. 4. The standing of the agency named is unknown to us.

ROSE.—If our era really did start from the birth of Christ you would be right, but the best scholars are agreed that the exact date of the birth of our Lord is hopelessly lost, but that it was at least three or four years before the year one of our era.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—Most physicians are very decidedly in favour of the total abolition of corporal punishment in schools. The editor of the *Medical Press* asserts that the London University College School, which is attended by 500 boys, has been carried on from the first without corporal punishment, and is equal to any school in England with respect to discipline.

A.—The festival of Whit-Sunday is appointed by the Church to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. In the primitive church the newly-baptised persons, or catechumens, used to wear white garments on Whit-Sunday. This feast is movable, and sometimes falls in May and sometimes in June; but it is always exactly seven weeks after Easter.

A. W. H.—The quotation of which you complain may not be correct; but if it is, you will find an offset for it in the lines we quote from Coleridge:—

"A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive."

W. R.—Little boys in Paris are wearing a costume resembling that of the peasants of the eighteenth century—trousers coming just below the knee, large waistcoat, falling very low, and a long jacket opening over the vest. Little girls wear the English dress—loose, with three broad plaited in front and four behind. It is looped and draped in paniers over a skirt made of a different material, usually plaid.

LETTER.—1. The article to which you refer is said to whiten and improve the complexion, but we do not recommend it or any other cosmetic. 2. It is worn at night upon going to bed. 3. Fleas and blackheads may be removed by the application of diluted alcohol. Dab it on with a linen rag night and morning, and avoid all rice, salt, or greasy food.

ALICE.—White nun's veiling will be worn both in simple and very dressy styles. For the plainest dresses of veiling there are blouson waists gathered to a belt, and worn with a skirt that has no drapery, and may be either full and gathered to a belt, or laid in wide kilt plaits that appear to hang loose, though they are secured on the wrong side.

W. M. G.—A member of a society has a right to offer his resignation at any time, provided that he has discharged all dues, fines and other obligations to the society. If the regular order of business does not provide for resignations, a resignation can be offered when new business is in order. The only form necessary is to say that you tender your resignation as a member of the society, and beg that it may be acted upon as soon as possible.

A. K. R.—You say that the change of dues was made by an amendment of the constitution, and not by "a mere resolution of a majority." The constitution, as amended, is the supreme law of your club; and the club having sustained the president's ruling as to the meaning and intent of the amendment to the constitution, all the members must abide by that decision. The club had the power to decide the question.

ORIAMA.—When one mark has been made by the scratching of matches on paint others follow rapidly. To effectually prevent this, rub the spot with flannel saturated with any liquid vaseline. "After that," says a correspondent, "people may try to strike their matches there as much as they like, they will neither get a light nor injure the paint," and most singular, the petroleum causes the existing mark to soon disappear, at least when it occurs on dark paint.

GRACE E.—If your husband can satisfy you that he has reformed, and is steady and industrious, we would advise you to live with him and depend upon him for support. You should make him fully to understand that if you give up your employment and return to him he will have to behave himself, and properly support his family.

M. G. B.—Unless this young gentleman proposes and acts in a more devoted and satisfactory manner, we would advise you to dismiss him. You should act with more spirit, and not allow your society to be monopolized by such a jealous and yet indifferent beau. You write very nicely.

P. W.—It is a common saying among musicians that the violin is the king of instruments, and the one which is the most difficult to master thoroughly.

W. G. B.—The Grecian knot is still worn in the street by young ladies, though for evening wear the hair is arranged on the crown of the head, and shall hair-pins, with glittering Rhine stones in the curved end, are worn as ornaments.

KATIE.—You had better confide fully in your mother and take her advice. You have acted very imprudently. Girls do not find good husbands among acquaintances picked up in street cars. Respect and love should be allied.

AURORA.—Do not undertake to change your natural colour. A blooming complexion is very beautiful in a girl of fourteen. A girl is of age at twenty-one. Something that you have worked yourself is the best present for your brother.

LENA.—When the palm is spoken of in the Bible, the date palm is usually meant. This palm is not found in our country, except as a curiosity in conservatories, but the palmetto of the south gives a fair idea of the appearance of palm branches.

ALDA.—The sooner that your parents are informed of this matter the better for all. You may encounter less opposition than you expect. We think that the gentleman had better speak to your father while you are at home. Do not act as if you were either afraid or ashamed. In the matter of the marriage ceremony consult the wishes and preferences of your family. It is the bride's privilege to name the one to perform the ceremony. Endeavour to conciliate your family in every way, since you are marrying one of another faith. Remember always that your parents are your best friends and good wishers.

LASS OF THE SUNNY BROW.

Lass of the sunny brow,
List to my earnest vow,
Darling, I love thee!
Peerless art thou to me—
In beauty's galaxy
None ranks above thee,

Lass of the azure eye,
Beaming with sympathy,
How I adore thee!
Whether in castle hall,
Or fashion-crowded ball,
None goes before thee!

Lass of the form of grace,
Moving with regal pace,
Star of my morning!
Oh, let thy radiance shine
On me! Be only mine—
My path adorning.

F. S. S.

SCIENTIFIC JOE.—The following is a convenient link for marking clothing by means of a stamp:—Twenty-two parts of carbonate of soda are dissolved in 85 parts of glycerine, and triturated with 20 parts of gum arabic. In a small flask are dissolved 11 parts of nitrate of silver in 20 parts of officinal water of ammonia. The two solutions are then mixed, and heated to boiling. After the liquid has acquired a dark colour, 10 parts of Venetian turpentine are stirred into it. The quantity of glycerine may be varied to suit the size of the letters. After stamping, expose to the sun or apply a hot iron.

A. R. D.—The leather which is to be made into patent leather is specially curried for the purpose, care being taken to keep it as free from grease as possible. It is then stretched on frames and given three or four coats of a mixture of linseed oil, lampblack and amber boiled almost solid and thinned with turpentine. An additional coat of the same composition, but with a much greater proportion of lampblack, is finally given, and when this is dry the leather is ready for the varnish. The varnish is made from linseed oil and Prussian blue, thinned with turpentine; two or three coats are applied, and then the leather is run into a drying-room heated to 175 degrees Fahrenheit. Experience is necessary to turn out a good article of japanned or "patent" leather.

MARIA D.—The use of the spoon is widespread, and dates from remote antiquity. The form which we use at the present day—a small oval bowl, provided with a shank flattened handle—is not that which has been universally adopted. If we examine into the manners and customs of some of the people less civilized than we—the Kabyles, for example—we shall find that they use a round wooden spoon. Romans also used a round spoon, which was made of copper. We might be led, from the latter fact, to infer that the primitive form of this utensil was round, and that the oval shape is a comparatively modern invention. But such is not the case, for M. Chantre, in making some excavations on the borders of Lake Palaeon, the water of which had been partially drawn off, found, in a good state of preservation, wooden spoons which in shape were nearly like those in use at the present day, the only difference being in the form of the handle, which was no wider than the shank. The lacustrine station where these were found dated back to the ninth century, and we therefore have evidence that oval spoons were already in use during the Carlovingian epoch. The Neolithic people used oval spoons made of baked clay. Several fragments of such have been found in the Seine.

W. G. B.—1. We have never heard of any evil effects following the use of dye on the moustache, although, if not attended to properly, the latter sometimes presents a curious appearance from the fact of the hair growing out and showing the undyed parts. 2. Take the gold to a jeweller, who will fashion it in the shape desired.

KATHIE.—How will the following acrostic suit you

"Blessed be as man or wife;
Easy, honoured, by thy life;
Sweet thy fate, as thou art sweet;
Slow to death thy pretty feet;
In the future let there be
Every good to welcome thee!"

DAISY.—The lady's parents are very foolish in trying to wreck her future happiness by compelling her to wed a man for whom she entertains no feeling of love. It would be far better to remain single all her life than to give her heart without her heart. She should try to impress the parents with this idea, and perhaps upon second thought they will relent, and allow her to marry a man whom she can love and honour.

LOTTIE.—1. Judging from the recital of your domestic troubles you are to be greatly pitied, for we can see no reason for the ill-treatment by your husband when you have always acted the part of a good wife. If the treatment is continued, there is but one sensible course to pursue, and that is to appeal to the protection of the law. Do not allow gossiping and officious neighbours to persuade you to strike him back, as such a course might end in serious trouble for both. 2. Trimming the ends of the hair will prevent it from splitting and breaking off.

JESSIE R.—1. Be guided by the wishes of your parents until you have attained an age at which you can judge between right and wrong. Girls of fourteen should think more of their school-books than of evening parties, lovers, and kindred subjects. 2. The trouble is, doubtless, caused by some organic disease of the throat. The only person from whom you can get advice as to treatment is a physician. 3. Both dates—March 18, 1884, and April 23, 1870—fall on a Saturday. 4. Penmanship is excellent for a young girl of fourteen.

L. L.—The distance between any two points is the same no matter in which way the measurement is taken. It is more convenient for those who live north of the equator to examine a map in which the North Pole is placed at the top. A globe is set on an axis so as to correctly represent the motion of the earth around the sun. The plane in which the earth revolves is indicated on every globe. The poles of the earth do not exchange positions in its daily revolutions, and hence, in globes the poles hold a constant relative position. Consult a globe.

E. H. W.—A good complexion is much more easily preserved than regained, but the following advice is good: Avoid greasy food. Wear comfortable broad-soled shoes without French heels, and a corset large enough to fit the figure. Take as much exercise in the open air as you can without fatiguing yourself. Wash your face with a piece of good flannel instead of a sponge, and put a handful of corn-meal in the water with which you bathe your face night and morning. Tan and freckles may be removed by rubbing the face with the inside of half a lemon sprinkled with salt every night before retiring, for a week or two. You must then be careful not to expose your face to the sun or a cold wind. Glycerine soap is the best for the hands.

CURIOS FAN.—Sardines are generally caught in nets, and after being well washed the heads are cut off, and the fish are sprinkled lightly with salt. After lying for a few hours, they are placed on grids, in rows almost perpendicular. The frames are then placed in pans containing boiling olive oil. The oil is changed as soon as it becomes too black and dirty for continuing the cooking process. As soon as the fishes are considered sufficiently cooked they are withdrawn from the pans of oil, and grids are placed on the tables covered with zinc, the surface of the table inclining toward a groove in the centre. The oil is thus carried to a vessel prepared to receive it. Around the tables stand the women whose business it is to pack the fish closely and uniformly in boxes. The boxes being full, the fish are covered with fresh oil, and the lids are then soldered down. Thus hermetically sealed they are placed in iron baskets and immersed in boiling water. The smaller boxes are thus boiled for half-an-hour, and the larger ones somewhat longer, in proportion to size of box. The fish are then ready for the market, and being packed in cases, are sent to the ends of the earth.

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